

Rotary

MAGAZINE



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WINTER 2024
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Sir Nicholas Winton

OSCAR WINNER
SIR ANTHONY HOPKINS
STARS AS THE HOLOCAUST
HERO AND ROTARIAN
IN HIS LATEST FILM

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Great Britain & Ireland

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Contact us

Editor: Dave King
editor@rotarygbi.org

Publisher: Contently Limited
contentlylondon.co.uk

Graphic Designer: Martin Tandy
martin.tandy@rotarygbi.org

Advertising Sales Agency
Century One Publishing
Rory Fear
Rory@centuryone.uk
01727 739181

Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland
Kinwarton Road, Alcester,
Warwickshire B49 6PB
01789 765 411
rotarygbi.org

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Welcome

SO here we are, a new quarterly issue of *Rotary Magazine*. Did you miss us?!

Yes, we're back after the last issue in October which had a special emphasis on membership which prompted a lot of positive feedback.

In November, a weekend conference was held at the University of Warwick to promote the new North Star project which aims to boost Rotary membership in Great Britain and Ireland to 60,000 in five years' time.

It is an ambitious project, supported with Rotary International funding, which will undoubtedly leave the curmudgeons grizzling into their glass half empty pints of bitter. But the plan has to succeed.

Rotary Magazine is part of that vision; a tool for membership growth. While its accent remains as a membership magazine, it has always carried an outward focus. A publication which presents content interesting to those outside of Rotary, telling our story and making you think.

For this first quarterly edition we have upped the ante with more pages and more stories than ever before.

We've moved the deck around a little with new features such as the Big Issue debating key issues of our time - this quarter it's artificial intelligence, not artificial insemination as Cliff Richard accidentally described AI during a recent BBC interview!

There's a new Rotary Book Club which I hope you will get involved with run by Kent Rotarian Becky Turner, and I am delighted that the very funny Geoff Mackey has joined the team to pen his 'Final Word' column.

But *Rotary Magazine* is more than just the print edition. Starting next month, we will be publishing *Rotary Digital*, a monthly digital magazine which you will receive via email, carrying the latest news and more new and exciting features every month.

Coming soon, I will be co-hosting with Phil Dyer the *Rotary Podcast* on a monthly basis which will feature some top guests from inside and outside the Rotary world.

Then there is *Rotary Audio*, which carries a recording of selected *Rotary Magazine* articles. I spoke at a District Council meeting recently where I was flattered when a Rotarian said she enjoyed hearing my voice in the shower as she listened to *Rotary Audio*. I'll be careful the next time I pass the soap!!

All of these products, an impressive portfolio of dynamic medium platforms, serve as public-facing story-telling.

They are one driver towards promoting Rotary to a wider audience; to those who know something about what we do, but want to know more.

But it is important you share them too. With the magazine, share it among friends and business colleagues. On digital, share the stories via email or social media; show the impact which Rotary has not just locally, but globally.

This issue is packed with stories from across the British Isles showcasing Rotary as People of Action. It serves to inform, challenge and entertain.

Enjoy the magazine, get involved, and I would love your feedback. You can email me at: editor@rotarygbi.org

Dave King
Editor, *Rotary Magazine*



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IF SOMETHING IS **NOT IMPOSSIBLE,** THEN THERE MUST BE **A WAY TO DO IT**

ROTARIAN SIR NICHOLAS WINTON WAS A WAR HERO WHO IS NOW
BEING CELEBRATED IN A FILM STARRING SIR ANTHONY HOPKINS

STORY BY **DAVE KING**

THE headline on the facing page are the words of Sir Nicholas 'Nicky' Winton, an amazing man who saved hundreds of lives during World War Two – and who was also a Rotarian.

Nicky is also the subject of the film 'One Life' which was released in UK cinemas in January, starring Sir Anthony Hopkins and Helena Bonham Carter.

'One Life' tells the true story of the young London broker who, in the months leading up to World War Two, rescued 669 children from the Nazis.

Indeed, in a pivotal scene, Sir Anthony who plays Nicky, is pictured at the BBC studios where details of his heroic work were broadcast for the first time. He is pictured on screen wearing a Rotary tie and pin as a proud member of Maidenhead Rotary Club in Berkshire. Nicky died in 2015 aged 106.

In December 1938 Nicky visited Prague. There he found families who had fled Germany and Austria, who were living in desperate conditions with little or no shelter and food, and under threat of Nazi invasion. He realised it was a race against time. How many children could he and the team rescue before the borders closed?

The film fasts forward 50 years later to that BBC studio. It is 1988 and Nicky is haunted by the fate of the children he was unable to bring to safety in England; blaming himself for not doing more.

It is then that the BBC television show 'That's Life' surprises him by introducing some of the surviving children – now adults – and only then does come to terms with the guilt and grief he had carried for five decades.

Producers Emile Sherman and Iain Canning first discussed Nicholas Winton's story when they co-founded See-Saw Films 15 years ago, having come across the 'That's Life' clip.

Emile Sherman says: "We knew the first step was to meet Nicky who we could tell from the television clip was going to be a very humble man."

Iain Canning continues: "We were very lucky to have had the opportunity to meet Nicky before he passed away. He was the most modest, generous human being, who felt the film should not glorify him, but celebrate how the most ordinary

of people can make a huge impact."

With the blessing of Nicky's daughter Barbara Winton, See-Saw approached screenwriter Lucinda Coxon to adapt Barbara's book *If It's Not Impossible*.

Collaborating with Barbara, who sadly died in 2022 during the making of the film, the screenwriting team gained access to Nicky's archives and letters, as well as her book about her father.

Barbara was a familiar face at Rotary District Conferences who wrote an article in *Rotary* magazine in 2019 which told her father's story.

www.rotarygbi.org/magazine/february-march-2019

"My father had a thick skin to get his projects done and it worked," recalled Barbara in the article.

"In terms of this project, my father felt he had failed. They had 5,000 names on this list and only 669 were saved. But 50 years later when the story came out and he met some of his children, we discovered there were about 7,000 people alive because of what he had achieved."

See-Saw Films producer, Joanna Laurie, admits the main challenge of developing the film was doing the thing which Nicky found most difficult: singling himself out.

She explains: "He really didn't see

himself as a hero, so our challenge was telling this extraordinary story while honouring his humility. The title of this film, 'One Life', could mean different things to different people but I think the movie asks us all to reflect, as Nicky did, about our choices as individuals and as a community."

Director James Hawes says this attitude was typical of the generations who faced the inhumanity of war.

"We have to put ourselves in the minds of that generation; you didn't speak about the war. I'm sure many people know grandparents and great-grandparents who have memories from the war and they don't talk about it because it was too awful."

Barbara Winton's book was also an essential resource for the cast.

Explaining how she got a sense of Babi, Nicky's mother and Barbara's grandmother, Helena Bonham Carter explains: "Barbara was named after Babi. I was very lucky to speak to Barbara, to have her perspective as a granddaughter as well, but Babi was also in her book."

Johnny Flynn, in his role of the young Nicky Winton, adds: "Barbara's book was an essential piece of research for me, along with several other books."

The film itself bridges two time periods – 1938 and 1988. ➔





One of the elements the screenplay needed to address was Nicky's own family history, and how it informed him and his choices.

Nick Drake, who wrote the screenplay with Lucinda Coxon, notes: "Nicky's Jewish ancestry meant he was alert to what it meant to be an émigré, from the rise of Nazism in Europe. He was ashamed by the Allies' betrayal of the Czech people in the Munich Agreement.

"Nicky saw the consequences of that agreement in human terms and these appalling camps where refugees from Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland were living in intolerable conditions.

"He was motivated by the reality he saw in front of him and decided to do something about it."

In distilling the war era story, Sir Anthony Hopkins – who plays the older Nicholas Winton – says: "It's about several people not just one man – saving the lives of children who are about to be consumed into the gas chambers and furnaces of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Belsen."

It was Barbara Winton's wish that Sir Anthony Hopkins, the winner of six Academy Awards, should play her father.

Producer Iain Canning reveals: "When Barbara read the first draft of the script she called us to say that Anthony Hopkins would be perfect for the role, which we of course agreed with, but

left us with a challenge because it was beyond our wildest dreams that Anthony Hopkins would read the script and want to play Nicky.

"But incredibly, he did, and it was magical for all of us to know we had an extraordinary actor playing a man who was such an inspirational humanitarian."

The film was shot in Prague and England, working across two time periods and working with two crews in two languages.

It was important to shoot the film in Prague, using the authentic Prague locations, even filming on the same station platform from where the children said goodbye to their families and departed for England more than 80 years ago.

A bronze statue of Nicky with two small children and a suitcase marks the historical spot at the end of the same platform. It is estimated that there are about 7,000 people alive today because of the Prague rescue.

Describing the challenges Nicky and the team faced to bring the children safely to the UK and find host families, Director James Hawes explains, "There was a belief in the UK they weren't at risk; a lot of people saying, 'it's fine, there's no issue, they're in Prague, they're not in Austria or Germany'.

"Another challenge was British bureaucracy and xenophobia: the

newspapers and politicians saying, 'We're a small, crowded island. There's no place for more people here.'

"Nicky had to fight that prejudice; raising the public consciousness, writing articles – way before the internet or broadcast news, where he had to somehow get the message out there through the newspapers, word of mouth, institutions, letters, so enough people would support him."

The tragedy of the final train, the ninth train to leave Prague in September 1939 was the pain which Nicky could not speak about when 251 children were loaded onto the train at Prague Station, ready to leave for England.

But that was the very day war was declared and the borders were closed.

The Nazis pulled the children off the train. As far as is known, all but four of those children died in the concentration camps.

For the emotional *'That's Life'* scene, producers invited Nicky's children and their relatives to be part of the film as supporting artists, with Sir Anthony Hopkins only told of their identity on the day of the shoot.

Anthony Hopkins recalls: "It was like a kick in the chest when all the descendants came in. It was hard to try not to be sentimental, but it was very moving."

Nicky was a conduit to the children's past, most of whom had lost their parents. Director James Hawes explains: "He was a lightning rod back to the roots of who they were.

"At that moment in the film, Esther Rantzen says 'anybody who owes their life to Nicky Winton, please stand up,' and our supporting artists, the relatives, do stand up because they also owe their lives to that man. Those people would not exist, but for him. There was not a dry eye on the set floor."

As for Sir Anthony Hopkins, the crew said he revelled in the production, loving the challenge of telling such an amazing story. He adds: "I only hope this will send a message lest we forget, because we forget so quickly." ●

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Yamna, after the earthquake in Morocco

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ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
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LIGHT THE PATH OUT OF DARK DAYS

In difficult times like these, it's impossible to avoid feeling heartbroken over the devastation and loss of life caused by war and destruction.

Rotary always stands against harming and displacing civilian populations and using armed aggression instead of pursuing peaceful solutions. We advocate for the observance and respect of international law. We believe in strong action to defend and promote peace, even in the darkest of times.

But we also take our position as an international, nonpolitical, nonreligious organisation seriously. To respect the global perspectives and experiences of our members, and to work most effectively in our peacebuilding efforts, we do not choose sides in conflicts.

Rotary is made up of 1.4 million people in communities all over the globe who are united in our commitment to building a peaceful world. We strive to ensure that our words and actions prioritise the health and safety of our global membership and the communities where we live and serve.

Our members seek to offer humanitarian assistance to those affected by conflict, and our global reach requires that we promote peacebuilding and conflict prevention with cross-cultural, cross-border connections and friendship through Rotary.

For decades, Rotary has harnessed these connections to carry out service projects, support peace fellowships and scholarships, and establish programmes like Rotary Peace Centres to help build lasting peace.

Our members also take action to promote Positive Peace, addressing the underlying causes of conflict, including poverty, discrimination, ethnic tension, lack of access to education, and unequal distribution of resources.

Rotary members who wish to wage peace can use district grants and Rotary Foundation global grants to support projects with other Rotary members that help refugees and displaced people, provide medical support, and more worldwide. Members can also work with or join peace-focused Rotary Action Groups, Friendship Exchanges,

Fellowships, and intercountry committees. And District Designated Funds or district cash can support our peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts.

Members and non-members alike can learn more about peacebuilding through the Rotary Positive Peace Academy, a free online training course available to anyone with an internet connection. You can find it at: positivepeace.academy/rotary

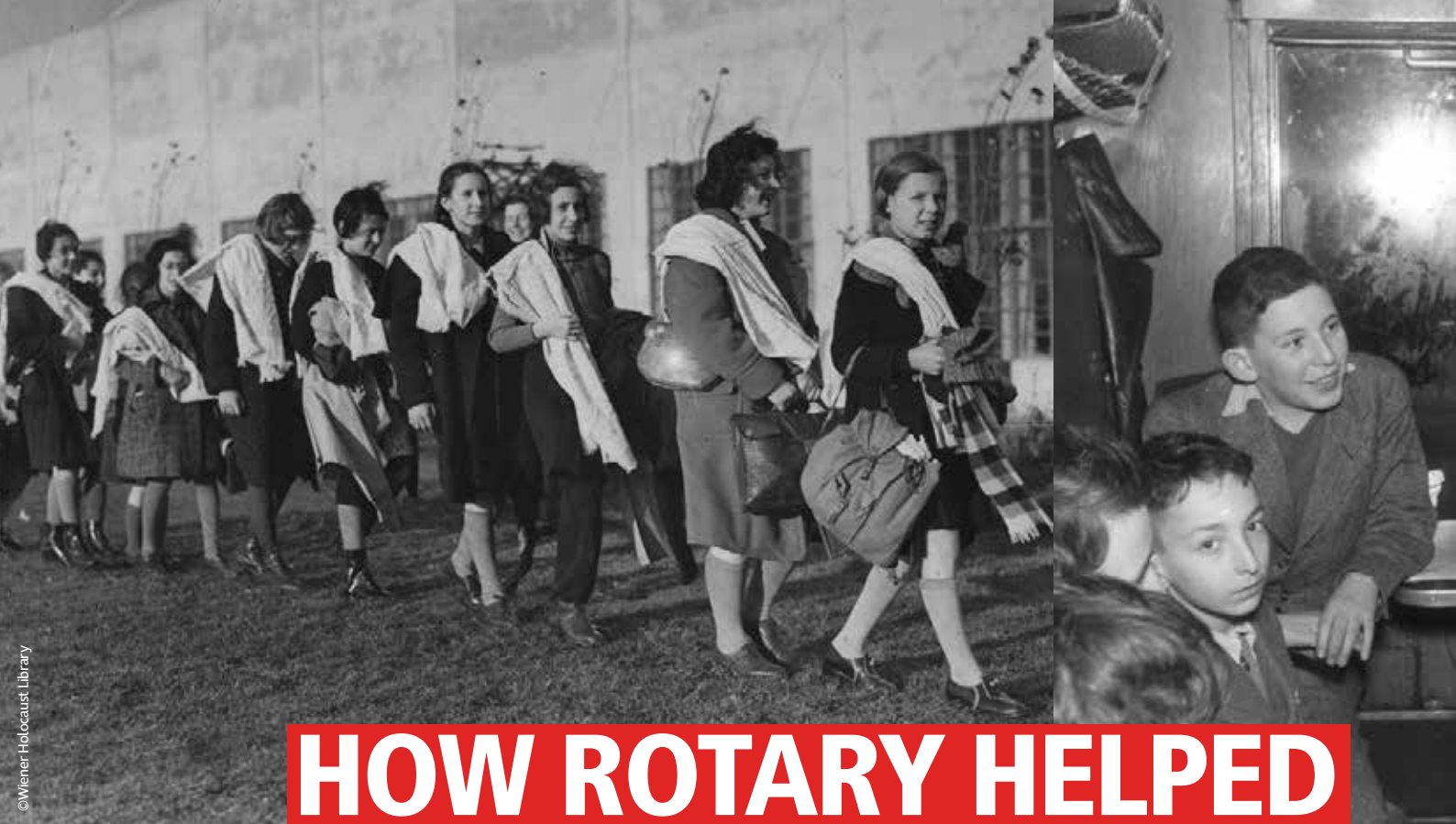
There is no denying that incidents of violence and atrocities being perpetrated around the world seem to be escalating. Global peace is fragile, and the stakes are getting higher.

Still, we know that it is possible to bring all people together to work towards a shared goal. Rotary members do so every day in every part of the world. May our ability to unify in common purpose be a spark that helps light the path out of these dark days.

Together, let's Create Hope in the World. ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

positivepeace.academy/rotary



HOW ROTARY HELPED THE KINDERTRANSPORT RESCUE

| STORY BY **MIKE LEVY** |

ON December 2nd, 1938, 200 young people descended a ship's gangplank in the Essex port of Harwich. They came from Germany without their parents, siblings, family, friends; they came alone.

These 200 were the vanguard of one of the largest acts of rescue in the Holocaust era. They were Jewish children from orphanages and homes that had been torched, battered or smashed by Nazi thugs on November 9th and 10th, 1938, – the so called 'Kristallnacht', the Night of Broken Glass.

The children had witnessed SS and Hitler Youth beating up their parents, wrecking their homes and businesses, arresting men and carting them off to be brutalised in concentration camps.

It was after this terrible night that parents in Germany decided to send their children to safety.

The children had no one in Britain to look after them; homes and support had to be found. Their arrival was entirely in the hands of volunteers as the British Government took no part in their rescue from persecution. Enter an army of British helpers among whom were Rotarians.

The children who arrived on that sunny December day had come on a train that left Germany the day before, travelled across the border into the Netherlands, on to the Hook of Holland and the night ferry to Harwich.

This was the preferred route of most of the 10,000 children who came to Britain on the 'Kindertransport'.

The last such transport arrived in Harwich on September 2nd, 1939, one day before war was declared.

Then, all borders were closed, the fate sealed for the Jewish children and their families, left at the mercy of the murderous Nazi state.

The nerve centre of this massive rescue operation was at Bloomsbury House in central London. Here committees were hurriedly set up by Jewish, Quaker, Church of England, Methodist and other relief bodies.

The Rotarians were an astoundingly active organisation who rolled up their sleeves to provide assistance to these benighted children.

Among these were Alfred Roberts, whose daughter Margaret – later Thatcher – became Prime Minister. Another was Frederick Attenborough, father of the naturalist David.

In each case they not only drew on their Rotarian networks for support but also went the extra mile in providing a home for German Jewish refugee children. The task was enormous: to find homes for the 10,000 youngsters.

Though formal research on the role of the Rotarian in the Kindertransport rescue has not been done, clues to the



help given can be found in newspaper archives and sometimes in the rare existing records of the refugee committees.

The *Worthing Herald* for January 6th, 1939 reported that Worthing Rotary Club had decided to 'adopt' two refugee children from Germany and an adult from Czechoslovakia who was forced to flee his country.

In practice, this meant Rotarians provided financial support for the children (a necessary condition of the visa waiver scheme) and foster homes in Worthing.

The club's President, Mr Linwood, hoped that this example would be copied by other clubs who were part of 'Rotary International of the British Isles'.

It was, he added, a way for Rotarians in Worthing to truly live up to the ideals of the club.

The way the Rotarians got together to help these children is exemplified in the story of Edith Mühlbauer.

She was a Jewish youngster from Nazi-controlled Vienna, aged around 16 or 17, who on January 21st, 1939, received a letter that would save her life. It was from her penpal Margaret Roberts, the future Prime Minister.

After the pogroms in November 1938, Edith wrote to Muriel Roberts in Grantham desperately seeking help to get out of Austria. Muriel, sister of Margaret,

told Edith that her father, a local grocer, was keen to help.

An active member of the Grantham Rotary Club, Albert Roberts read out the appeal from Edith and asked for help. The club members decided to bring her over to England and supported her with a guinea a week pocket money.

Too old for the Kindertransport scheme, the Grantham Rotary Club helped get Edith a visa to travel to England. About that life-saving visa, Edith wrote to the Roberts, 'I thank you very much for sending it. I will never in my whole life forget you.'

By April 1939, Edith had arrived in Grantham with two presents: handbags for Muriel and 13-year-old Margaret.

Their father, also a local preacher, ignored some local voices expressing anti-semitic views, and opened his home to Edith. It was not an entirely happy affair as Edith found the Roberts family kind but rather cold, so she was moved to another Rotarian family in the town.

Later in life, Edith looked back on that letter from Muriel Roberts: "If Muriel had said, 'I am sorry, my father says no', I would have stayed in Vienna and they would have killed me."

In a similar vein, Frederick Attenborough, President of the Leicester Rotary Club, also won support for looking after Jewish refugee children.

He and his wife took in two German

Jewish sisters who became part of the Attenborough family for the rest of their lives.

The range of support for these children by Rotarians extended from fundraising appeals, talks to raise awareness of their plight and the provision of safe homes for the refugees.

One such talk was given by the Rev W.W. Simpson to Bristol Rotarians on May 15th, 1939.

The *Western Daily Press* reported that Simpson, later a co-founder of the Council of Christians and Jews, said: "No movement was better qualified than Rotary because of its ideals and its constitution – to interest itself in the refugee problem."

Though the scale of the Rotarian response to Hitler's persecution of its tiny Jewish minority (less than 1% of the German population), is not yet known, there is no doubt that the movement played a significant role in the help of refugees and the Kindertransport children in particular. ●

- Mike Levy is the author of the book *'Get the Children Out! Unsung Heroes of the Kindertransport'*. He is currently researching British families who took in Kindertransport refugees. If your family, or someone you know, hosted a Jewish refugee from 1938, contact Mike at: mike.levy82@gmail.com



ROTARY CROSSES BORDERS TO HONOUR WAR-TIME HEROES

ON February 14, 1943, 23-year-old Flight Lieutenant Billy Kirk took off from RAF Leconfield en route to Cologne, piloting a Wellington bomber with his crew of five.

The bomber was attacked by a Luftwaffe night fighter flown by Ofw Hermann Schonthier two kilometres south of Meerhout, near Antwerp, Belgium. One Flight Sergeant was killed instantly, three other members of the crew managed to bail out and spent the rest of the war at a camp in Poland.

However, Billy Kirk and Pilot Officer Mason were unable to bail out as their parachutes had been burned in a fire which extended from the main wing spar to the tail.

As the local people watched, the plane circled, trying to avoid housing, but both airmen perished in the crash.

A German army recovery group arrived to claim the wreckage, but an argument developed with the nearby Luftwaffe unit, led by Ofw Schonthier, who also claimed the wreckage as 'theirs.'

Neither of them found the tailplane of the aircraft because a farmer had already hidden it. In 1985 it was recovered and placed on a pedestal as a memorial which carries the names of all six members of the crew.

The memorial is mistakenly called 'The Wing' because that was what locals

thought it to be; however, when the error was realised, it was decided to keep the name 'Wing' because it has become so well known.

Billy Kirk and Pilot Officer Mason are buried in the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in Antwerp.

Had he survived, Billy Kirk would have been father-in-law to Wolverhampton Rotarian, Richard Green, and grandfather to his son Jeffrey and daughter Kathryn.

On a recent visit to Belgium, the Rotary Club of Tessenderlo welcomed the family with an excellent example of fellowship and remembrance of an outstanding hero.

Every year, on the anniversary of the crash, the local Association of Belgian Military Veterans hold a parade at the 'Wing' to pay tribute to the crew and give thanks for all the service personnel who gave their lives in seeking to liberate their country.

Richard explained: "Jeffrey, Kathryn and I arranged to visit Meerhout to pay our respects and this was when the local Rotary Club of Tessenderlo, under the leadership of President Andre Oeyen, stepped in to make our visit so memorable.

"We went to a specially arranged meeting of the club that was also attended by the Rotary Club of Geel to



hear a fascinating talk by local historian Andre Van Genechten.

"The next day, we met at the Town Hall where we signed the 'Golden Book' in the presence of the Mayor, Nele Geudens. The book commemorates memorable events in the town.

"We then went to 'The Wing' accompanied by the Mayor, where a special parade by the Belgian Association of Military Veterans was staged in our honour followed by the playing of national anthems, short speeches and the laying of a wreath by Kathryn."

During the ceremony, the family were introduced to 85-year-old Melanie Eyskens - who witnessed the crash and saw the remains of Billy Kirk and Mason in the wreckage before being told to go away by the Germans.

Richard added: "It was an emotional visit made memorable by the fellowship of Rotary across borders." ●

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ROTARY REACHES THE STARS

IT'S not often you get a Hollywood celebrity joining your Rotary club, but that's what happened to the Rotary Club of Ballymena in Northern Ireland.

To mark the 80th anniversary of the County Antrim-based club, they conferred an honorary membership on film star Liam Neeson, who grew up in Ballymena and whose family have close links to the Rotary club.

Lynda Bell, the club's membership chair explained: "Liam Neeson's family are well-known in the town of Ballymena. Indeed, some of the family members are stalwart supporters of our Rotary club events.

"As membership chair, I discussed with the family the proposal to confer honorary membership on Liam, who had attended Northern Regional College, the same school as myself.

"I subsequently contacted his PA in New York, setting out the club's ethos and the various community projects and youth activities in which it engages.

"Needless to say, I was delighted when the reply came back within 24 hours, stating that Liam 'humbly accepted our invitation'."

The Rotary Club of Ballymena is one of 70 clubs in District 1160, receiving its charter on September 27, 1943. Members, former members and friends attended a celebratory dinner in the Adair Arms Hotel in the company of the Mayor of Mid and East Antrim, Alderman Gerardine Mulvenna, and Rotary Ireland District Governor, Kenny Fisher.

At the dinner, Lynda told the audience that honorary membership was a special award and it was being offered to the Hollywood star in recognition of his outstanding achievements over a long and distinguished career.

She told guests: "In addition to numerous accolades in the film industry, Liam's commitment to charitable causes, particularly UNICEF, embodies the very essence of Rotary and 'service above self'.

"Liam has volunteered with UNICEF for over 20 years and as a goodwill ambassador for the charity he has visited Mozambique and, more recently, Jordan, to meet children affected by the Syrian crisis."

Although unable to join the event, Liam sent a video message from his home in New York. He said: "I want to pass on my heartiest congratulations to the Rotary Club of Ballymena on this, your 80th anniversary; 80 years of service to the community is a magnificent achievement.

"I pay tribute to those founding members who had the courage and vision to establish the club in 1943, right in the middle of the Second World War.

"I commend your members today who share that same commitment to improve the lives and conditions of people in my great home town of Ballymena and across the world.

"I am deeply honoured to accept your invitation to become an honorary member and wish you

continued success in the years ahead."

Following this message, his honorary certificate and Rotary lapel pin were presented to Liam's two sisters, Elizabeth Connaughton and Bernadette Sexton, who were present on the evening.

The honorary certificate, along with a photograph of Liam receiving the certificate, went on display at a Rotary exhibition held in the Braid Arts Centre Town Hall during the first two weeks of October. ●



WATCH VIDEO 

Scan the QR code to watch the video



"I WANT TO PASS ON MY HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ROTARY CLUB OF BALLYMENA ON THIS, YOUR 80TH ANNIVERSARY; 80 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY IS A MAGNIFICENT ACHIEVEMENT."

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The
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EVERY DOG HAS HIS DAY!



ROTARIANS from Builth Wells in mid-Wales have taken a dogmatic approach to boosting club membership.

Meet Farley, a Golden Retriever who has been inducted into Builth Wells Rotary Club as an honorary member.

He has been part of the Rotary family for the past year, taking part in a number of activities with his carer, Heather Gethin, who is visually impaired.

Heather's husband, Nigel, joined the Powys-based club in 2022 and has been involved with helping to fund-raise for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

So when Rotarian Richard Davies suggested that Farley should be conscripted into the ranks of the club, as an acknowledgement of Nigel and Heather's dedication to the charity, Rotarians were quick to get behind the idea. Farley was inducted as an honorary member at the aptly-named Greyhound Hotel.

Presiding over the event was Rotary club president, Ciaran O'Connell, who presented Farley with his certificate of

honorary membership and a Rotary badge to be proudly worn on his harness.

Guide Dogs Cymru's representative, Ruth Evans, the Community Fundraising Relationship Manager for Wales, was also present and received a cheque for £500 from Past Rotary President, Baden Powell, which was his nominated charity during his term of presidency.

Ruth delivered a fascinating talk describing the work of the charity, reporting that the cost of training one guide dog was over £54,000.

Guide Dogs Cymru provides life-changing mobility services to adults, children and young people who have sight loss throughout Wales. Ruth thanked Builth Wells Rotary Club for their support in this important work. ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

guidedogs.org.uk

"HE HAS BEEN PART OF THE ROTARY FAMILY FOR THE PAST YEAR, TAKING PART IN A NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES WITH HIS CARER, HEATHER GETHIN, WHO IS VISUALLY IMPAIRED."

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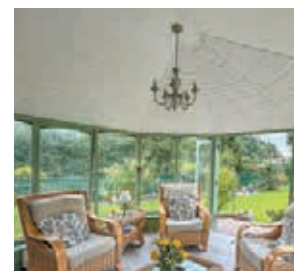
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'JUST ONE LIFE'

THE BRUTAL TRUTH FOR YOUNG DRIVERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

| STORY BY **MILNE ROWNTREE** |

A HARD-HITTING road safety message for young students on the north coast of Northern Ireland was delivered at a recent event organised by the Rotary Club of Coleraine.

More than 600 secondary school students listened intently as the 'Just One Life' event brought home the harsh realities resulting from road traffic collisions – especially for young drivers.

Coleraine Rotary Club organised the event which enabled experienced police officers, fire and rescue staff and Northern Ireland Ambulance representatives to give gripping detail on the horrific scenes they had dealt with on local roads.

Dr Duncan Redmill, Lead Consultant in Trauma at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, delivered a no

punches held talk on the injuries which he and his team face following road traffic collisions.

The students then watched as a very realistic enactment of an actual collision which resulted in the death of four young people was played out to the audience.

It had been caused by a 17-year-old who had been using their mobile phone whilst driving, because of which they were imprisoned for seven years for dangerous driving.

The audience then listened intently to solicitor Stephen Scott who explained some of the legal ramifications for drivers in collisions, especially if they were at fault.

To bring the message home, the 55 students were asked to stand up to represent the number of fatalities on Northern Ireland roads for the year to

date. A stark reminder to all.

Coleraine Grammar School hosted the event, and they were joined by students from Loreto College, Dominican College and North Coast Integrated College, as well as students from Ballycastle's Cross and Passion College and High School.

Graeme Strachan of the Rotary Club of Coleraine, the principal facilitator of the event, thanked everyone who contributed to the day. He said: "The main objective of this event is to make students pause for thought before they make foolish, rash, or bad decisions whilst driving.

"I would reiterate that this is a hard-hitting, direct presentation, and that is how it is designed; however, if this event saves just one life, then the work everyone has put into this morning has been a success." ●





AQUABOX HELPS FAMILIES REBUILD THEIR LIVES

AQUABOX has had one of its busiest years as a humanitarian charity providing aid to Ukraine, Morocco, Libya, Syria and Turkey.

The charity, managed and run by the Rotary Club of Wirksworth in Derbyshire, provides boxes of essential humanitarian aid together with a special filter to guarantee potable drinking water, to people in crisis-hit areas.

After last February's massive earthquake which struck southern and central Turkey, along with northern and western Syria, Aquabox responded to the disaster along with other humanitarian charities by providing aid.

They have been helping families on either side of the Syria/Turkey border who are without adequate shelter or safe water supplies, and unable to return to their homes. Of greater consequence has been the harsh Balkan winter weather.

Teaming up with Water Survival Box, a partner charity which also provides humanitarian aid, Aquabox prepared a large joint consignment of aid which left the depot in early October.

The water filters and Gold boxes packed with pieces of aid equipment, were

distributed by volunteers to impacted communities in Syria and Turkey – before the winter weather took hold.

The devastating earthquake which hit southern Morocco in September killed many people, destroying homes, villages and vital infrastructure.

A week later, severe flooding in Libya claimed hundreds of lives, as well as destroying essential infrastructure.

In the immediate aftermath of disasters like this, there is a high risk of deadly water-borne diseases such as cholera – and the need to provide safe drinking water is critical in order to avoid further loss of life.

Since the disasters occurred, Aquabox has been working with partners in the region to set up a secure supply route into the disaster zones.

Early in October, a large consignment of filters was sent to Morocco and Libya, together with a substantial shipment of Aquabox Gold boxes.

Aquabox's partner in this response is International Emergency Team UK (IETUK), the FIRE AID-affiliated charity who they worked with when responding to 2022 floods in southern Pakistan.

IETUK has established a team of

trusted distribution and delivery partners on the ground in both countries, and they will manage the distribution of our shipments to those most in need.

Following a fantastic fund-raising effort by Rotary District 1940 in Germany, as well as generous support from supporters across the world, Aquabox has been able to send a further consignment of water filters to Ukraine.

The shipment was transported by Aquabox's logistics partner, John Midgely, to the Rotary Water Sanitation and Hygiene hub in Lviv.

From the hub, half of the shipment will be onward shipped to Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine to provide safe water to communities impacted by the collapse of the dam earlier this year.

The remaining part of the consignment was distributed across the country by the WASH team in Lviv to families and communities with the greatest need – in total meeting the water needs of almost 15,000 people. ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

aquabox.org



GARRETH MURRELL is a member of the Tyneside Rotary Club with a decade-long military career, including tours of Northern Ireland and Bosnia. Having overcome his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder thanks to Neuro Linguistic Psychotherapy, Garreth changed careers to become a psychotherapist as well as founding the charity 'Veterans at Ease'. To date, Garreth has helped over 400 veterans, serving personnel and their families deal with PTSD and find peace of mind.

A year ago, after 45 days 1 hour and 54 minutes at sea, Garreth Murrell completed the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge as part of Team Emotive, made up of three members of his military mental health charity Veterans at Ease – Chris Harvey, Jason Watkin, and Phil Kite. It is regarded as the world's toughest row - a 3,000 mile feat of endurance from San Sebastian in La Gomera in the Canary Islands, to Nelson's Dockyard English Harbour on the Caribbean island of Antigua & Barbuda. In completing the epic challenge, Garreth became the first Rotarian to cross the Atlantic Ocean in a rowing boat.

After three and a half years of training and fund-raising in order for the challenge to take place, all that lay in front of Garreth was nearly two months of battling the elements in one of the world's most foreboding oceans. How did he get on? Garreth takes you through the journey in his own words.

ROWING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

STORY BY **GEORGE BICKNELL**



RACE DAY

DECEMBER 12TH, 2022

WALKING down to the marina is quite surreal, knowing that once we depart there is no going back, as literally after one mile out at sea, the currents and tides are so strong you cannot physically row back.

A few other rowers are also stirring and, like Chris and myself, are silently walking down to the marina one last time in quiet contemplation of what must be done and what is yet to come.

As the clock ticks ever onwards to 12:00 - our departure time - I'm sat in the boat in my seat connected by a harness and elasticated leash, looking up at my wife. Despite the couple of thousand people present I can only see my darling wife.

I gesture to her using hand signals

that I love her as tears begin to roll down my cheeks. They are tears of happiness, knowing that all I have to do now to see her again is row to Antigua until someone says stop rowing.

We row out slowly to much applause and pageantry then before we know it, we are two miles out and that's it, no going back - the game is on!

THE FIRST WEEK

IT'S said in briefings that the worst time is the first seven days. I found this to be most certainly true.

There is so much going on that your body and mind are desperately trying not to get overwhelmed.

You have to eat, sleep, and go the loo all in the space of three single beds whilst sharing this space with three other men who are not slight in stature.

There's the sun to keep away from, the motion of the boat and, of course, getting used to each other - how we are in the early hours as well as how we are before and after a two-hour shift on the oars. The blisters were dealt with by wrapping them with zinc oxide tape - after a few days, the skin under the tape hardened quite nicely.

STORMY WEATHER

THE following seven days from Boxing Day were, by far, the most taxing and testing for us - the weather started to get worse, and quickly.

There is a need for a great deal of self-care in conditions like these and personal admin in dealing with soaking clothes and swollen hands due to the constant wetness. Eating and drinking enough food and fluids becomes laborious and even talking is something that, if you are not careful, drifts away.

So, when the boat gets struck by rogue waves that come out of nowhere at night, your mettle is very severely tested.

The waves at this time were at their highest at around 25 to 30 feet. Of course, the benefit of rowing hard to get to the top before they break is that you get that massive surge forward as you literally surf down the other side.

Watching the speed counter became exhilarating when you hit a new speed record and disappointing when you thought you'd got a good wave and didn't go as fast as you'd hoped.

RAISING MORALE

NOW the rains had stopped, and the sun had returned, this gave us time to dry our things out and once again get back to normal (normal for us anyway).

I decided that I had spent far too long eating cold food so made it my purpose to boil water every day and rehydrate everyone's meals that they'd chosen. The first hot meal I had tasted was wonderful. It was like I'd only tasted food for the first time and every spoonful was a pure taste sensation. ➤



That simple task of heating water to make hot food had a large influence on the morale of the crew. We began making good decisions about the course with quicker changeovers, well, Jason and I did; Phil was hilariously late and lots of laughter would happen as he took over from his manservant Chris. We didn't call him five-star Phil for nothing!

A RUDE AWAKENING

PHIL'S STORY

AROUND week 4 Phil and I were happily rowing in sync together and chatting where possible when Phil noticed a small green light off to our rear port side. I'll hand over the story to Phil now...

"On my second night shift at 2am, I suddenly saw a boat's green light really close and told Garreth who clocked that he could see it too.

After only two oar strokes we could see both its navigation lights which meant it was bearing down on us, and fast!

"We had no power due to low light levels for the previous few days which meant our batteries hadn't fully charged up, so no AIS or navigation lights were on to tell the other boat of our presence.

"Whilst the boat was bearing down on us Chris was now awake; he used his headlamp to assemble the radio. Once Garreth got the torch the radio arrived but appeared to me not to be working.

"I gave it Garreth, and I used the high-power torch to point directly at the boat - after a few long, and I mean really long, seconds the boat shone its light on us and at the same time responded to

Garreth's calm yet urgent message that they were now aware of us.

"It then sped, and I mean sped, across our stern from right to left less than 100 feet away. The captain just said we wish you luck and they were gone."

On reflection, if we had done nothing there was a very high likelihood of a significant and catastrophic incident.

APPROACHING ANTIGUA

WE have been in touch with our loved ones ensuring they have everything we need when we arrive.

Two days to go and things are feeling like they are coming to a veritable whirlwind of a conclusion.

We see Antigua for the first time at night. The bright lights are a fiery giveaway.

We can now also see the lights of other Caribbean islands and I keep checking the chart plotter to make sure we are still heading for the right island.

It makes me wonder what the mariners did long ago when approaching a new island at night.

JANUARY 26TH, 2023

CHALLENGE COMPLETED

AS the day breaks, we are in clear sight of Antigua and can see individual houses as we are now only eight miles or so away.

Our skipper is in touch with the race safety team who is telling us to row closer to the shore and then row parallel to it.

Around 11am, the first other human beings we have seen since the race yacht incident arrive in the form of two

Antiguan Coastguards.

They circle us for a few minutes, probably ensuring that we are OK. Then, just before they speed off, they shout "Welcome to Antigua". Wow! For some reason that was a really emotional moment for me.

Finally, we cross in between the two buoys, and Ian Crouch from the race safety team lights a flare from where he is at the small fort on a small peninsula that juts out into the bay. We can now stop rowing. We have done it!

Emotions well up like a volcano erupting. I lean back and congratulate Chris who has leaned forward to do the same. I lean forward and give our skipper a hug; he was steering us in manually from around three miles out. Then we let the oars go and get out of our foot straps.

We are being led in and directed by Atlantic Campaign staff and make landfall with a gentle bump. Waiting for us are around 80 cheering, clapping and flag-waving souls.

We can finally go forward to hug our expectant loved ones who have flown out to meet and greet us when we land - as you can imagine there are lots of tears.

One last thing, we get led over to a gazebo where waiting for us is a lovely plate of burgers and chips and a nice ice-cold beer... heaven!

Would I do it again? Well, you'll just have to book me in for a talk to find out! ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

garreth@veteransatease.org

Paul's walking no longer an uphill battle thanks to **TURMERIC+**

Walking is one of the most beneficial forms of exercise, and also one of the most underestimated in terms of wellbeing. It's a great way to reach the recommended level of physical activity needed to stay healthy without the toll to joints, ligaments and muscles.

When taking longer walks however, some of us can find it difficult. Paul Goddard, 66, a Nordic Walking instructor from Saffron Walden in Essex, swears by a product called Turmeric+.

"I decided to become a Nordic Walking instructor in 2009 and started walking 40 to 50 miles a week. Two years ago it became uncomfortable to walk distances that should have been easy for someone of my age and fitness levels. I felt very apprehensive as walking is not only my passion, but my business."

Paul continues: "I started doing some research. I learned that

turmeric could be helpful and bought supplements... and then stumbled upon Turmeric+."

Curcumin, the active ingredient in turmeric, is difficult for the body to absorb. Some turmeric products offer high levels of curcumin but unless this is easily absorbed by the body, the higher amounts make little difference.

This is what led the scientists at FutureYou Cambridge to create Turmeric+ using the patented 'Curcuma Phospholipid Complex' formulation. It's 30 times more absorbable than standard turmeric and contains vitamin C, which contributes to normal



"Soon after taking it I experienced that 'light-bulb' moment"

collagen formation for the normal function of cartilage.

"Soon after taking it I experienced that 'light-bulb' moment - I realised my knees felt like they used to. I take Turmeric+ religiously now. I walk around 200 miles a month and even my customers have remarked on my mobility."

"Walking is great for fitness as

well as your mental health. Being able to walk easily has made a huge difference to my life and I feel fitter now than I did twenty years ago."

Adam Cleevely, Chair of FutureYou Cambridge comments:

"We have tens of thousands of happy Turmeric+ subscribers who regularly tell us about their positive stories, just like Paul."

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FutureYou Cambridge is offering you the chance to trial its premium joint health product, Turmeric+, for just £5.*

The offer is aimed at helping those who commonly suffer with joint health issues. Turmeric+ has received numerous positive reviews since its launch, becoming the company's best selling product.

'I used to suffer with great discomfort in my knees and neck, particularly when going up and down the stairs,' says Jacqui Hunter, 60, who runs her own event management consultancy and enjoys yoga, golf, gardening and travel.

'It certainly improved my flexibility and mobility dramatically and I've recommended it to lots of my friends. When you find something that works for you, you want to help others too.'

Turmeric+ is certified by Informed Sport. Adam Cleevely, FutureYou Cambridge's Chair, explains: 'We want to support more people to become or stay active. We think Turmeric+ can play an important role in that journey. 'We're happy to offer people their first pack of Turmeric+ for



just £5 so they can experience it for themselves. Most people know if it's working for them within four to eight weeks - and if they like it, they will stick with it.'

"It certainly improved my flexibility and mobility dramatically"

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THE EVOLUTION OF SHELTERBOX'S EMERGENCY SHELTER AID

John Cleverley, Rotary Marketing Officer with ShelterBox, outlines how the charity, founded by Rotarians at the turn of the century, operates in disaster zones.

EMERGENCY shelter is at the heart of what ShelterBox does, and we are constantly adapting the support we offer.

It's this practical and flexible approach that drives our work and allows us to be there for people after they are caught up in traumatic events.

DOMES TENTS

From our first response after the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India, we became known for our domed Vango tents and it's still a strong and spacious shelter to this day. As we responded in different climates with heavy rainfall or winter temperatures, we adapted our tent design, adding extra ventilation, further rain protection and a silver lining for heat retention and reflection.

UN FAMILY TENT

We continued to learn from the people we supported and from other organisations and found that sometimes a standard approach across organisations can be best when assisting communities.

For example, in many projects ShelterBox works alongside governments and other charities to provide a standard

disaster shelter, such as the UN Family Tent. These tents are large and better suited to some of the communities we are working with. We initially started to use the UN Family Tents in Syria in 2013, as they work well where people find that they have to settle for some time.

SHELTER KITS

Depending on people's context, a tent is not always the right shelter solution.

When there has been a flood or homes are destroyed in war or extreme weather, there isn't always space for a tent or solid ground to place them on, or in situations where homes are damaged and they need making safe.

The next step on our journey started in 2014, when we began providing shelter kits in Paraguay and northern Syria.

These disasters were both in urban areas and needed a shelter type that was more flexible. These very practical kits include two heavy-duty tarpaulins, a spade, hammer, saw, nails and wire.

OTHER MATERIALS AND SOLUTIONS

In Burkina Faso we work with people displaced by conflict. There, we have been adapting shelter structures to suit local

customs and situations, providing the Sahelian Tent. The design makes use of tarpaulins, stretched over a locally sourced wooden frame, with large openings to allow good airflow. It's a more durable structure suited for use by people who have been displaced in the extreme climate of the Sahel region.

Also on the African continent, our partners in Nigeria, ACTED, worked with trained carpenters to build shelters more suited to local customs and contexts using heavy duty tarpaulins and a timber frame.

The Bama shelters create a home for up to five people with windows and an internal partition to provide privacy or to allow smaller families to live together.

ShelterBox is evolving so that we can find the right solutions that meet the needs of people affected by different disasters in different places.

We also understand even more that shelter is the crucial foundation that enables families to recover and re-build after conflict and disaster. ●

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shelterbox.org

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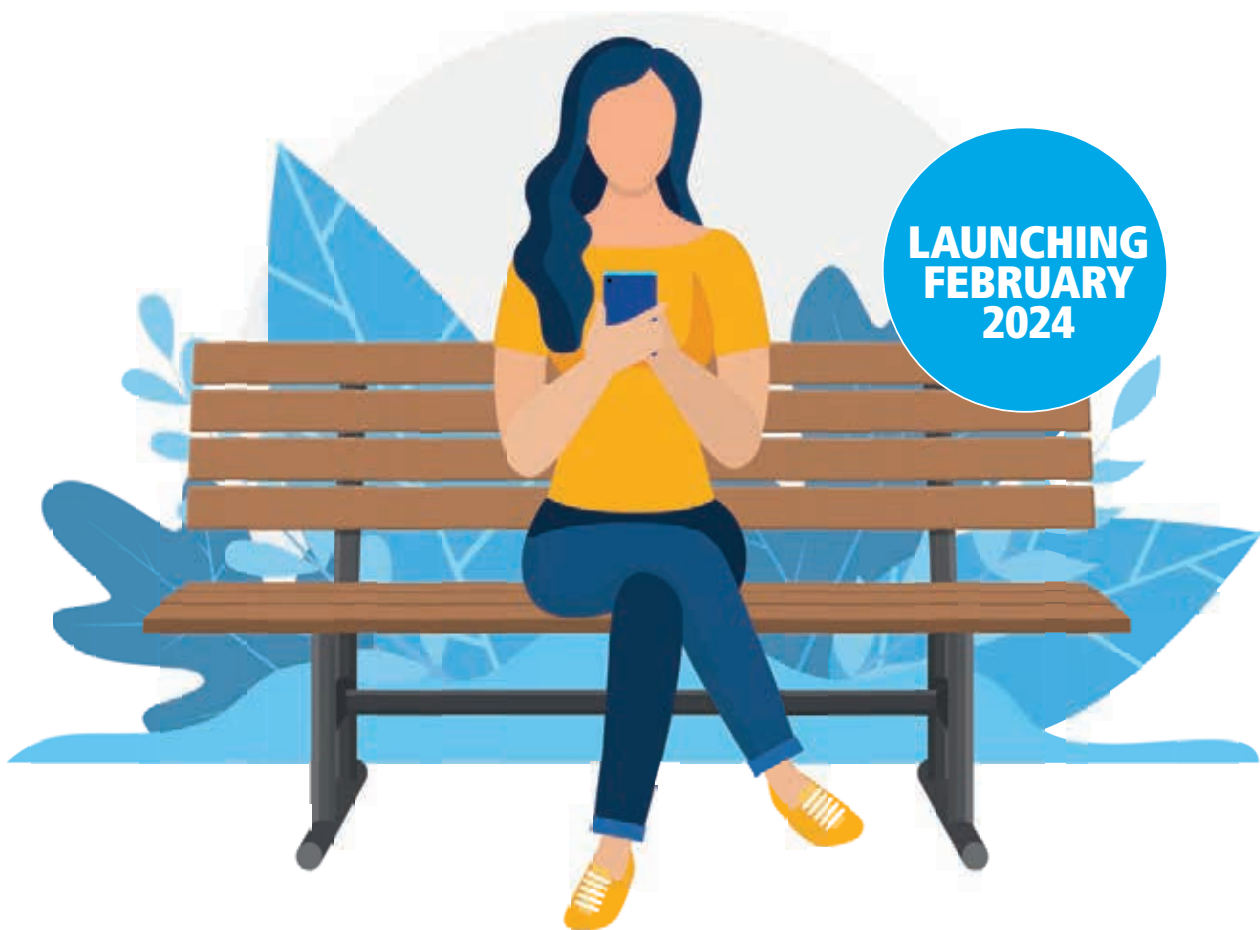
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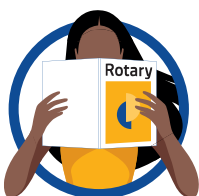


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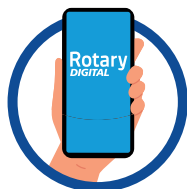
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ROTARY AT COP28

| STORY BY **JAMES BOLTON** |

SEVENTY thousand delegates and leaders from 197 countries and geographical areas recently descended on Dubai for the COP28 United Nations climate conference, which is seen as a key platform for forging worldwide commitments to tackle the global climate crisis.

This was Rotary's third time attending the fortnight long conference, after previously attending COP26 in Glasgow and COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

The Rotary International Pavilion, situated in the event's Blue Zone, played host to more than two dozen sessions looking closely at how climate intersects with health and poverty.

Leading speakers covered a diverse range of environmental topics, including the impact of invasive species on biodiversity, smart energy, mass movement on urbanisation and regenerative agriculture.

Rotary's delegation included President, Gordon McInally, General Secretary, John Hewko, Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair, Barry Rassin, and Judith Diment, dean of the Rotary Representative Network.

For Gordon McInally, mental health has been a major focus for his presidency, with Rotary clubs around the world launching initiatives in their communities to support people during this

growing crisis.

Climate anxiety has been growing in prevalence in recent years too, with escalating climate emergencies causing mental distress to people worldwide.

Speaking about the conference, Gordon said: "The record global temperatures this year have underscored the immediate need to take action on climate change.

"They have also demonstrated the massive destructive toll that climate has taken on global mental health.

"Being part of the Rotary delegation was an honour.

"There has been so many informative presentations and opportunities to have meaningful conversations with the UAE Government, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization (WHO) on potential partnerships in the field of mental health."

Also part of Rotary's delegation were 12 Rotaract members from across the globe, who have each lent their voice to climate action projects and activities in their communities and further afield.

The fortunate dozen included two members from Great Britain and Ireland; Elliott Lancaster, founding President of Keele University Rotaract and now a member of Mercia & Marches Rotary, and Rob Sisson, a member of Tyneside Rotaract.

Elliott is Sustainability Chair at the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, and founder of Utter Rubbish, a student-led social

enterprise that uses data to promote better waste management and tackle fly-tipping.

Rob also shares a passion for the planet in both a professional and voluntary capacity, with the latter including leading projects to protect the coastline across the north-east England.

The environment became Rotary's seventh Area of Focus in July 2021, with The Rotary Foundation committing more than \$23.7 million towards environmental projects led by Rotary members around the world.

One key initiative has focused on mangrove forests, which help to protect coastlines and marine life.

Rotary members in the United Arab Emirates, where COP28 was held, are planting 50,000 mangrove trees in partnership with the government.

"Mangrove ecosystems in the tropics and subtropics around the world are in peril because of their position along coastlines," says Christopher Puttock, Chair of the Rotary Action Group for Endangered Species.

"Because of the rapid sea-level rise we are experiencing, and the persistent need for human coastal development, these ecosystems are being squeezed out of existence.

"Working with governments and local communities, Rotary has the unique opportunity to assist in mangrove restoration projects." ●

LET'S MAKE OUR CLUBS IRRESISTIBLE!

| STORY BY **STEVE MARTIN** |
SPECIALIST ADVISER TEAM LEAD, MEMBERSHIP

THESE are important times for membership within Rotary, both globally and for Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland where the three pillars of sustainable growth in growing Rotary are:

- Delivering value to existing members
- Bringing in new members
- Starting and nurturing new clubs

In an all-members' survey in 2022 it was confirmed that the single most important factor in members' satisfaction is the club experience. A good club experience and delivering value are vital.

It's simple. If people enjoy their club experience they will stay, if not they will leave. It's just like a business, if we deliver the product our customers want, they will stay.

How do we know if they are having a positive club experience? That's easy, we just ask them!

A club health check is the best way of doing this and we have an electronic version which is available to you now. Your district membership lead will be able to help conduct this at your club.

However, you can just do your own club survey too.

We repeat this every year because the dynamics of our club change every year.

Remember, if you do the same thing every year you will get the same results!

So how do we welcome and support new and prospective members, while at the same time ensure current members are enjoying their Rotary experience?

The majority of those who join our organisation state service to be their reason for wanting to join.

So, it's important we have current and relevant projects for them to be able to take part in. Mentoring new members is also vital; let's find out about them and what they would like from their Rotary.

We must of course make members new and old feel welcome. All must feel that they belong and that they are included in club activities.

Do all your club members have a say in decisions at your club? It is important

that members have confidence in the leadership of the club and that they are open to new innovative ideas.

Do the members of your club have a My Rotary account? This is essential to stay engaged with Rotary and get the full benefit of the opportunities which lie within the organisation.

It is so important as members that we look beyond the walls of the club. It is also important new members understand that Rotary has a huge amount to offer in terms of self-development.

Last year, we held two successful membership campaigns when we brought in 1,600 new members to Rotary in these islands. Statistically, 50 % of these new members will leave within two years.

So, let's make the club experience a top priority for all our members so as we hold onto these new members and take Rotary in these islands to another level.

Let's change our club culture and remember our values and behaviours so as to make everyone feel welcome and valued as a member. Ultimately, let's make our clubs simply irresistible. ●



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HAND IN HAND WITH ROTARY IN GAZA

STORY BY **LES BOWN** |
**DIRECT MEMBER, YORKSHIRE
& NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE HUB**

It was at the Bill Huntley Memorial Peace Seminar held at the University of Bradford in 2020 that Nabila Al Zaeem talked to the audience about what was happening at her home in Gaza - just 140 square miles along the Mediterranean, north of the Sinai Peninsula, wedged between Israel and Egypt.

Rotary Peace Fellow Nabila explained how the people of Gaza were suffering because of little support from the outside world and suggested to “get Rotary involved in Gaza”.

Fast forward three years, the current, fast moving and ever-changing situation demonstrates how important the support from organisations such as Rotary International are needed.

Following Nabila's speech, the Rotary Hub decided to find out more.

During on-line meetings with Nabila and Youth Council members in Gaza, we realised their activities were in line with many Rotary avenues of service so we decided to run a trial project called ‘Hand in Hand with Rotary in Gaza’.

Back in 2020, a business case was developed identifying significant problems within Gaza's communities, addressing the extremely poor economic situation plus the difficulties people were facing with the COVID pandemic.

The Rotary Hub also wanted to raise awareness of Rotary International helping their communities.

As a result, we developed a crowdfunder project and raised funds thanks to several individual donations.

The problem, however, was getting the money into Gaza with end-to-end auditability.

The suggested route to transfer money was not suitable for our needs as we could not guarantee delivery to the Youth Council members. The Rotary Club of Monmouth in Wales acted as bankers, taking money into their charity account which sat there for 18 months while we sorted out a route into Gaza.

We finally identified a Gazan group, ‘Save Youth Future Society’ (SYFS) which was authorised by the Palestinian government to channel funds into Gaza via a Palestinian bank account for humanitarian activities. The proviso was the money could only be used for a specific project with an auditable path to its destination. SYFS already had links and worked with the Youth Council in Gaza.

At last, we had found a secure route for the monies raised and soon we received email messages and videos from Gaza showing the Youth Council reaching into their communities.

More donations followed from the Rotary Clubs of Harrogate Brigantes and Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire, and again we received evidence of this being used to support the communities in Gaza as intended.

We then moved to a sustainable

programme by engaging with Rotary District 2452 (which is Rotary in Armenia, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates), particularly the Rotary Club of Ramallah, which is working with the group in Gaza. We were hoping to finalise these links at the beginning of October, but with recent events these have been put on hold.

It was never going to be easy, but through Hand in Hand with Rotary in Gaza and the development of Rotary links to Palestine, we hope that the urgent need for Humanitarian Aid can continue to be provided.

When the time is right, we will develop sustainable partnerships to support the region for the future.

So, what now? Nabila and Rotarians in Palestine are still communicating with people in Gaza and they have a greater understanding of the immediate need.

The Rotary Clubs of Ramallah, East Jerusalem and Bethlehem have launched an urgent appeal to raise funds.

Support for this emergency appeal is vital. We have opened avenues for donations to the appeal. ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

Contact Les Bown
lesbown@btinternet.com



STORY BY **BY NABILA AL ZAEEM** |
ROTARY PEACE FELLOW

VIEW FROM GAZA

WE, the people of Palestine suffering with the destructive effects of isolation and ongoing war, thank you from our hearts to Rotary Ramallah and other Rotary clubs for your support.

Your donation is vital for us and helps us to survive, to heal and maintain resilience to this cruel reality.

We are struggling to survive every moment, every day. We are struggling to keep our children and families safe, but there is no safety, there is no security, there is no food, no medical services, no medicine.

Winter is coming. We are meeting it with fear: we don't have warm clothes or heating to resist freezing winter days and nights.

We live in temporary shelters, basements, in tents, in school buildings and any places we can find.

Our markets and shops are out of stock, so we have food shortages here. Recently 15 bakeries were ruined so the families running them lost their income and the wider community lost access to everyday bread.

Survival in this devastating world is impossible without external aid. Helping hands of Rotary bring a light of hope, dignity and integrity to our conflict-affected communities.

Rotary's donations give us an opportunity to help those who are the most affected, whose voices have not been heard, who otherwise would not survive cold, starvation and homelessness.

We will be able to provide psycho-social help to the children who now live in the schools, in the classrooms where once they used to study.

We will plan activities to ease their

burden of displacement, reduce their grief due to the tragic deaths of their families and other shortcomings of the war.

Over 5,000 children get services every day thanks to Rotary's help.

With Rotary's support we provide daily food to 100 families. These children and women have no other chance to get food. It also keeps them safe, as too many people die while walking in the streets looking for food or other essentials.

With greater Rotary support we could extend our community cooking places in Rafah and Khan Younis, where we have served over 1800 people.

Every day we bake five sacks of flour for the most marginalised people by using ancient tools that work on wood and cartons.

Such initiatives help us to reduce the burden on families from long waits in queues to get their bread. We even bought a cow to provide meat for warm dishes for 800 families.

No one can predict how long the war may last and for how long we will be locked in isolation. We still need support. We still need everyday bread and clean water. We still need to reduce the negative impact of the war on our children.

Please keep supporting us. Please pray for us. Please pray for peace. Let peace be with you. ●



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ADAPT OR DIE?

STORY BY **ALICIA RIDOUT**

IN the few years since I joined Rotary, we have seen technology advance in ways which could be the subject of Hollywood sci-fi movies.

While many still use text messages to get appointment reminders, the world has entered a new phase of its digital evolution, driven by humans, in the midst of global climate challenges, wars, mass migrations and other international events.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is all over the press and in the news. AI is in our smart phones and in our smart assistants like Amazon Alexa or Google Nest. AI helps us choose things to buy, influences our decisions, helps doctors to

find tumours at an earlier stage, and also provides cover for criminal activity.

Regulation is playing catch up and, in the meantime, ethical frameworks and guides are being published to try and manage its design, development and deployment.

So, what is Artificial Intelligence?

The Oxford (online, of course) dictionary describes it as:

The theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.

But for most people it's like smoke

and mirrors, invisible to the eye, whose way of working is unknown and mysterious. AI is part of my doctoral studies looking at the safe use of this technology with older adults in England and there are a few salient points helpful to keep in mind.

AI is using big data and the humans designing it employ that data to train it to answer questions or solve problems.

The challenges are complex but include, for example, using data which may not reflect the needs of older people or those from diverse communities.

Big data is often taken from the internet for this purpose, so it is hard to be absolutely sure that it's accurate.

LESSON 1 DON'T ASSUME IT'S TAILORED TO ME; DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

You may have heard of ChatGTP which is a Large Language Model (LLM) AI. It has taken all the words on the internet and when you ask it a question, it will use that 'data' to create an answer.

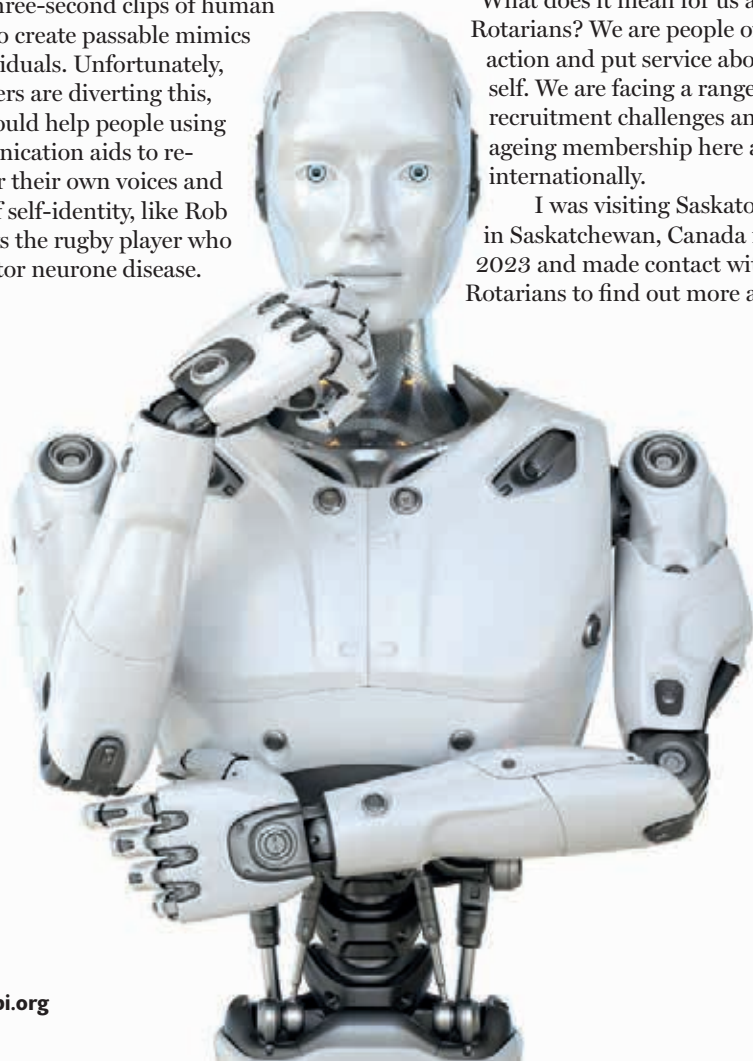
If it doesn't know the answer, it can create a response which looks completely valid but is made up. Equally, it might forget things it has learned.

ChatGTP is subject to copyright laws, so it does not reference anything it uses. And sometimes, it can be wrong.

ChatGTP is also useful to create easy-to-understand text which may help with patient information, for example. It is a generative-form of AI which continually learns from its own activities.

LESSON 2 USE AI, BUT FACT CHECK IT, BE VIGILANT AND BE OPEN ABOUT USING AN LLM.

Similarly, the latest AI technology is using three-second clips of human voices to create passable mimics of individuals. Unfortunately, scammers are diverting this, but it could help people using communication aids to re-discover their own voices and sense of self-identity, like Rob Burrows the rugby player who has motor neurone disease.



LESSON 3 USUAL RULES APPLY TO EVERYTHING WHERE SCAMMERS AND PHISHING ARE CONCERNED – STAY SAFE ONLINE.

There are multiple definitions and examples, podcasts and guides available, in particular on BBC Sounds, which provide thought-provoking, accessible information to help us manage this new technology.

It is embedded in many of our favourite smartphone apps and tablet devices, so it is no longer a future state we can avoid.

We need to learn more about AI and understand the risks and benefits. That way we can decide what we feel about it and how it might help us, for example, stay safe and independent at home as we age.

LESSON 4 KEEP LEARNING, ASK QUESTIONS, USE VERIFIED, TRUSTED SOURCES OF SUPPORT.

What does it mean for us as Rotarians? We are people of action and put service above self. We are facing a range of recruitment challenges and an ageing membership here and internationally.

I was visiting Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, Canada in 2023 and made contact with Rotarians to find out more about

their club. They are facing the same challenges we are.

They recognised the opportunities technology is now presenting Rotarians internationally and I joined their face-to-face meeting with an online presentation from Rotaract members in Morocco.

Members are already experimenting with ChatGTP to create marketing materials. AI is helping us communicate across the world, and locally via Facebook and other social media platforms.

New Rotarians are likely to expect that we are a digitally enabled and a smart community.

We are at a crossroads and can avoid the 'smart' world or embrace it in an educated fashion where we still put human interaction, well-being and connectivity front and centre.

Adapt or die? As a worldwide community, we have the opportunity to choose a new path. ●



ALICIA RIDOUT

Alicia is an occupational therapist, director of a digital co-design company, a clinical safety officer and doctoral student looking at digital clinical safety in the use of AI with older adults already using this complex technology. She is presidential nominee for Aireborough Rotary Club, near Leeds.

THE BIG ISSUE

If you have a topical issue which you are an expert in and would like to share in future Big Issue platforms, then email: editor@rotarygbi.org

NORTH STAR

60,000 MEMBERS BY 2028



ROBERT MORRIS

**CHAIR OF THE BOARD
FOR ROTARY GB&I**

WHY NORTH STAR?

OUR great organisation has to adapt now to keep up with the vast changes happening in wider society. While becoming recognised as a regional pilot by Rotary International has been a boost, our new regional governance arrangements were a home-grown initiative.

Our strategic Regional Board can consider and implement long-term plans; much as you'll find in big business. We finally have a five-year strategic plan and through continuity the Board intend to see that through. After all, it's not a coincidence that North Star is a five-year vision.

Projects are considered through small working groups that include specific skills available in the wider membership.

Membership growth and experience sees a positive experience starting with that initial enquiry and continuing by fulfilling their desire to give something back to society through Rotary.

The communications workstream is streamlining many aspects of online

information, administration, and messaging, for members and the general public.

Learning and development is reviewing the whole facilitated learning programme.

Also, by locally supplementing the materials on the RI Learning Centre, we have an opportunity to get accreditation and be recognised for the skills we can offer potential future leaders in business, as much as within Rotary.

Organisational effectiveness encompasses cluster development, financial stability through different approaches as much as cost efficiency, and the complex legal plan for incorporated status.

Specialist advisors have a greater GB&I regional focus and work collaboratively with the Rotary Great Britain & Ireland Support Centre at Alcester.

Becoming one of two regional pilot areas, also brought the potential for Rotary International investment; supporting their regional adaptability

pilots. Getting RI funding was a successful yet bumpy ride, much as with any business investment.

Detailed tasks are linked to the action plan and our workstream outputs, with key performance indicators to monitor progress.

North Star grew from needing a sound funding case, yet it is more a vision to truly grow our membership to 60,000 by 2028; through an expansion of business as usual, including new routes to membership, and projects to modernise the organisation and make it more appealing to modern society.

We are now into the operational phase of implementing the North Star whole and sharing the vision with district teams and your clubs.

This is complementary to, not instead of, the ongoing work of the Specialist Advisor Teams, Support Centre and very much the districts.

It is now for each of you to help translate the ambitious vision into a successful reality. ●

ROTARY YOUNG CHEF WINNER EXPERIENCES TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Eimhear McGrath's trip to Tuscany included lessons at a prestigious cooking school and trying a selection of delicious Italian food.

| STORY BY **GEORGE BICKNELL** |

AFTER winning the national final of Rotary Young Chef 2023, 15-year-old budding chef Eimhear McGrath got to experience an amazing culinary adventure in Tuscany alongside her mum Sarah.

A student from Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Penrith, Cumbria, Eimhear was chosen as the winner of Rotary Young Chef 2023 after blowing the judges away back in April and her prize was a trip to Toscano Saporita, a renowned cooking school in Tuscany.

The competition was sponsored by Filippo Berio, the UK's most popular olive oil brand who also organised the trip.

Touching down in Pisa, Eimhear and Sarah were driven to Toscano Saporita where Eimhear and other students from around the world were taught skills in making the perfect pizza dough and

producing beautiful ravioli.

As well as her experience at the school, Eimhear and her mum were treated to lots of quality Italian food throughout their trip, including gelato from World Champion artisan Gelateria Dondoli.

Eimhear and Sarah also got to soak up all the local culture they could, visiting galleries, vineyards, the Italian Riviera and, of course, the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

At the end of her time at Toscano Saporita, Eimhear was presented with her graduation certificate and a special tin of Filippo Berio extra virgin olive oil by Sandra Rosy Lotti, founder and owner of the school.

According to Sarah, the award has renewed Eimhear's passion for cooking and she was inspired by everyone she met at Toscano Saporita.

Eimhear commented: "Everyone there was so welcoming, they made me feel part of the family."

Eimhear learned a great deal about Italian food during her visit to Toscano Saporita and the school invited her to return should she want to pursue a career in cooking.

Eimhear and Sarah added that they are both incredibly grateful to Sheila Monkhouse, Eimhear's school cooking teacher, the Penrith Rotary Club, and to Filippo Berio for providing such an amazing opportunity. ●



FIND OUT MORE ➔

Scan the **QR code** to find out more





Readers' letters

Every issue, we invite Rotarians to discuss topics featured in the magazine, or wider Rotary concerns.

✉ Fight the good fight

I HAVE been a Rotarian for quite a while, both in Herne Bay and at an English-speaking club in Silves, Portugal. I have recently rejoined Herne Bay Rotary Club and have been made to feel very welcome.

Although I am 80, I still work and in my spare time, I write a little poetry when something inspires me. I am no Robbie Burns or Pam Ayres – I usually just write a bit of nonsense. However, I wrote the attached poem especially for Rotary and thought I might share it with you. I hope you enjoy it.

Keep up the good work.

| Joanna Verrico
Herne Bay Rotary, Kent

Rotary the world over

*Rotary, Rotary, fight the good fight,
not with weapons of power and might,
fight instead at the scourges of war.
On homelessness, hunger and helping the
poor, we are few, and there is much to do.*

*Rotary, Rotary, fight the good fight,
bring the uneducated into the light.
Give them tools that they may learn,
to fish or farm, or read and earn.
We are few, and there is much to do.*

*Rotary, Rotary fight the good fight,
show them that the future's bright,
why waste billions on a race to space*

*if we cannot help the human race?
we are few, and there is much to do.*

*Rotary, Rotary fight the good fight,
they need fresh water and be free from
drought, and people like us need to shout
for justice and freedom throughout the
world, the Rotary banner flying unfurled.
we are few, and there is much to do.*

*Rotary, Rotary fight the good fight
for peace and equality, just do what's
right. Though we are few, and there is
much to do we can make a difference,
we will, will you?*

✉ Paul Harris Fellowship disappointment

SOME 10 years ago, during my club's handover meeting, I was pleasantly shocked and delighted that on behalf of my fellow club members, our outgoing president awarded me a Paul Harris Fellowship.

Previously, I had served as assistant club secretary and then for seven years as club secretary, during a 10-year period when I had been involved with most of my club's activities and clubs within South Yorkshire.

Four years later, I was surprised again when I was awarded a second Fellowship in recognition of my efforts as club president and as an assistant district governor for three years.

These two presentations have meant a great deal to me, but I have always

adopted the Rotary motto "service above self" and never sought any recognition for my efforts.

Much to my great amazement, and in a way disappointment, on the morning of this year's club handover, I received a third Paul Harris badge, this time from Rotary Great Britain & Ireland.

Why? Because I had handed over some hard-earned cash to The Rotary Foundation. I have contributed to The Rotary Foundation for 26 years, most years by annual payment through my club. I became a Sustaining Member a few years ago.

Sorry, this third Fellowship and badge means nothing to me. I thought the first two were in appreciation of my work for Rotary locally, nationally and

internationally. This third Fellowship belittles those of us who put "serve" as a paramount element into our Rotary involvement and membership.

By all means, recognise individuals, be they Rotarians or others, for their donations to The Rotary Foundation.

But to Fellowship Rotarians, or other deserving recipients of a PHF who have given their time and efforts, they should not receive the same recognition as someone who just makes a financial donation.

| Alex Ritchie
Rotary Club of Abbeydale,
South Yorkshire.

✉ Being a Rotarian means being tolerant

IF by interposition of providence I someday were to find myself standing on a platform in some great Coliseum looking into the eyes of every living Rotarian, and were to be told that I could have one word to say, without an instant's hesitation and at the top of my voice, I would shout 'toleration'!

This is the first line of Paul Harris's message to Rotarians in the first ever issue of *The National Rotarian* in 1911. Golden words, don't you think?

Relevant then, even more relevant now.

Toleration means the practice of tolerating something, in particular differences of opinion or behaviour.

Enduring fellow humans and their opinions, sympathy or indulgence for beliefs, or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own or simply the act of allowing something would mean you tolerate. It's a virtue in today's world.

Rotary's diversity, equity, and inclusion statement carries forward this message of Paul Harris, especially when

we have so many social media platforms for instant communication, when there is always a chance of reacting to something without being tolerant.

Moreover, the world is continuing to face challenges based on race, religion and nationality.

Polio eradication efforts would not have succeeded without toleration. Growth of Rotary the world over through different eras would not have happened without toleration.

Tolerance is the cornerstone of everything positive and good. It is the basis of our four-way test.

Service and fellowship are the basis of Rotary. And tolerance is the key to both. The world will have less problems if more people are tolerant. This is why Rotarians have to step up and show the world how communities are served, how friendships across boundaries are developed, how peace is achieved, all with a bit of tolerance.

| AP Singh
Rotary Club of Chandigarh, India

✉ Focus on humanitarian needs

A VERY serious issue has been raised by one of our club members regarding Rotary International's recent "Statement on the conflict in Israel and Gaza". The second paragraph clearly indicates political bias by RI towards Israel "condemning the horrific attack by Hamas on Israeli citizens and appalled at the number of people who have been injured, killed or kidnapped."

What happened in Israel was undoubtedly horrific, yet RI appears to have ignored the effect of the subsequent reprisals in Gaza.

It is interesting that out of 40 current conflicts around the World, RI has singled out only two, the Israel-Gaza and Russia-Ukraine conflicts.

For comparison, the previous

statement about Ukraine explicitly called for immediate ceasefire. It also called for humanitarian aid, which was followed up with action. However, in the statement about Gaza there is no mention of ceasefire or humanitarian aid whatsoever.

Apart from being political, is this not supporting the breach of the seven areas of focus that Rotary advocates?

Would it not have been much better for RI to have focused on the humanitarian needs in the Middle East and elsewhere and avoided singling out and condemnation of any country or group?

| Stephan Stephan
Rotary Club of Maidenhead
Thames, Berkshire.

✉ Feeling sheepish

STEVE Melcher's article regarding the International Fellowship of Birdwatching Rotarians reminded me, not so much of birds he saw from a canal barge, but of an exhausted and drowning sheep I once encountered on a canal trip (Rotary, October).

Failing to corral the poor animal using our barge as a sheep dog, I jumped into the water and managed to shove her onto the towing path to safety.

Service above self no doubt, but I still await my bravery award from the Royal Ruminant Society.

| David Telford,
Rotary in Saffron Walden, Essex

✉ We've got to change

I ALWAYS read it starting from the back for reasons best known to my subconscious. The latest issue unusually got better the further to the front I got (Rotary, October).

Our club's membership levels are, if anything, slightly increasing because we are still a successful active club in every way except in recruiting pre-retired members. Guidance on how we can stimulate younger generations to join Rotary in any way would be top of the things I'd like to read about in *Rotary* magazine.

I fully support the new membership initiative, but I can't see the ROMEOS (Retired Old Men Eating Out) in Rotary wanting to be bothered by change. Please keep up your good work. We've got to change!

| Derek Jeary,
Ripon Rotary, Yorkshire

CONTACT US ➔

If you would like to contribute to the letters page, please email:
editor@rotarygbi.org



25

Transforming Lives & Global Cleft Care For 25 Years

Smile Train is the world's largest cleft-focused charity, with a sustainable approach to a single, solvable issue: cleft lip and palate.

Clefts are the most common facial difference globally, affecting around 1 in 700 babies. In the UK, cleft surgery is carried out within the first 12 months of a baby's life by the National Health Service (NHS). However, hundreds of thousands of children living in resource-poor communities worldwide are not as fortunate and do not have access to the lifesaving cleft treatment they desperately need.

An untreated cleft can lead to difficulties with eating, speaking, hearing, and even breathing. Babies and their families can also experience isolation from their communities.

For the past 25 years, Smile Train's sustainable model has been empowering local medical professionals with training, funding, and resources to provide free, high-quality cleft care to children in their own communities. It's how we've sponsored more than 1.9 million life-changing surgeries so far, and we won't stop until every person in need with a cleft has access to the care they deserve.

Smile Train is no less committed to treating the whole patient through programmes that provide access to vital non-surgical comprehensive cleft care treatments. These include nutrition services, orthodontic and general dental care, speech therapy, and emotional support, all intended to ensure long-term, successful rehabilitation for our patients.



OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- **1.9M+** Smile Train-supported cleft surgeries since 1999
- **2,100+** empowered medical professionals
- **1,100+** partner hospitals
- **90+** countries where Smile Train has helped children
- **Every 5 Minutes** Smile Train-supported cleft treatment helps a child in need
- **1 Goal:** To give every child with a cleft the opportunity for a healthy, productive life.

Book a Speaker for a Meeting!

Learn more about the work of Smile Train and how your Rotary Club can help to change the world one smile at a time.

To book a speaker your meeting contact Jonathan by emailing ukinfo@smiletrain.org or calling **0113 841 8101**.



Unmasking Savannah's Smile

Anna was elated to discover she was pregnant. She couldn't wait to have a second child to smother with motherly love. She felt this way even when, one month before her baby's birth, something shocking showed up on the ultrasound.

Savannah had a cleft.

It was entirely unexpected. Both Anna and her husband had seen people with clefts before but never knew much about them. No one in their family had ever had a cleft. Where could it have come from? Anna worried it was somehow her fault but knew she would love Savannah with her entire heart no matter what.

Once Savannah was born, Anna scoured the city for any help she could find but met only dead ends and shut doors.

Though desperate and beyond exhausted from caring for a child who struggled to eat, she did not lose hope. At last, when Savannah was nine months old, Anna found what she had been searching for — and more than even she had ever dared imagine. A local social worker pointed her to Smile Train partner care centre Mabuhay Deseret Foundation, where he assured her Savannah would receive all the cleft treatments she would ever need, 100% free.

Anna scooped up Savannah and ran to the foundation. The cleft team patiently answered all her questions: Savannah's cleft was not her fault or her husband's.

There was no catch: Thanks to Smile Train's generous donors, all the medical care — including not only multiple surgeries but also speech therapy, orthodontics, and other interventions — her daughter needed to smile and thrive really would be completely free.

But this was spring 2020. Anna's familiar feelings of helplessness returned as the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to stop Savannah's cleft journey before it ever really began. Still, her family refused to give up helping her however they could, and neither did the team at Mabuhay Deseret. They constantly checked in on them, offering any advice they could for keeping physically and mentally healthy during those trying times.

Perhaps their most healing intervention was the promise they made: They would always be there. As soon as it was safe, Savannah would receive the cleft surgery she so needed.

They were as good as their word. A few weeks shy of her third birthday, the local authorities determined that in-person care was safe again and Savannah received her cleft lip surgery. Though the team had earned her trust, Anna still couldn't help but fret in the waiting room.

When they wheeled her out, her parents were over the moon. They couldn't believe her transformation in just over an hour!

Now, Savannah loves playing outside. Instead of gawking at her cleft, neighbours are awestruck by her glowing smile. Savannah is also a budding creative. When she isn't running around, she's showing off her latest dance moves or practising her writing. Her parents can't wait to see what she'll do next.

The whole family is extraordinarily thankful to Smile Train and Mabuhay Deseret Foundation. With their help, Savannah gets to look in the mirror every day and see a bright smile. And an even brighter future.



REMEMBER ROTARY

*Every Rotarian has a legacy.
Share yours today.*

Your actions have enhanced the power of Rotary. Your kindness, drive and generous support have changed lives. It will take continued dedication such as yours to keep Rotary effective for generations to come.

To explore the options please contact your Endowment & Major Gift Advisor,
Tom Hunt, at tomhunt@littlebarnca.co.uk or call **07860 525831**



LEAVING A LEGACY

| STORY BY **TOM HUNT** |
**ENDOWMENT & MAJOR GIFTS ADVISOR,
ROTARY GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND**

BACK in 1917, the then President of Rotary International, Arch Klumph, had a vision to create a Permanent (Endowment) Fund so that Rotary could continue “doing good in the world” forever through our only charity, The Rotary Foundation.

The Rotary Club of Kansas City made the first donation of \$26.50 which has risen to nearly \$1.6 billion in cash and pledges. We hope to build this to \$2.025 billion by 2025.

An ambitious target, but with every Rotarian's help, we can achieve it.

Some members have suggested that we should spend this money now on good causes because many people in certain parts of the world need all the help they can get right now.

That's not the right view, because doing good today is the purpose of the Annual Share Fund.

There is a clue in the word “permanent” which is the basis for all endowment funds which are set up so the capital is never spent, but the earnings are.

So, how can you help, and that's

**“ACT NOW TO LEAVE YOUR
LEGACY THAT WILL HELP
CHANGE LIVES, IMPROVE
LIVES AND SAVE LIVES IN
PERPETUITY.”**

where leaving a legacy comes in when you have passed to higher service. Starting with just \$1,000 and anything up to \$9,999 means you become a benefactor to The Rotary Foundation.

If you are able to leave between \$10,000 and £24,999, you become a member of the Bequest Society.

For this level of gift and, for that matter at any level, you can designate which area of focus (or combination), World Fund, Annual Fund or Peace Centre you want the earnings of your gift to be spent on.

If you decide not to designate an area, then your money will go into the World Fund for Foundation programmes with the greatest need.

For pledges of \$25,000 or more you

can have a named fund. As the amounts rise, the options open up. The fund could bear your name, your family's name, or the name of a loved one.

An advisor such as myself, will work with you to prepare a customised testamentary gift agreement which formally states your wishes.

Higher amounts will mean you could have multiple named funds, target your gift to support a peace scholar or be part of a Global Grant that is directed at an area of focus dear to your heart.

In short, for larger pledges we will customise the agreement to ensure the earnings end up exactly where you want them to go. There is no other charity that gives you this flexibility.

So act now to leave your legacy that will help change lives, improve lives and save lives in perpetuity. ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

tomhunt@littlebarnca.co.uk



PEDALLING FOR PROSTATE CANCER

FIND OUT MORE ➔

rotarygb.org/events/rotary-ride

The efforts of multiple Rotary clubs across Great Britain & Ireland ensured communities were united in raising money by getting on their bikes

STORY BY **GEORGE BICKNELL** |

ROTARIANS nationwide ensured that Rotary Ride 2023 successfully raised thousands for prostate cancer charities.

Communities were invited by their local Rotary clubs to take part in cycling events to raise money and awareness for the disease.

So far, over £15,000 has been counted in Rotary Ride earnings which is being distributed to Prostate Cancer UK, Prostate Scotland, Prostate Cymru, Irish Cancer Society and local organisations.

This means that since the event started in 2014, over £60,000 has gone towards prostate cancer research and education.

From getting together to tackle tough routes over tough terrain to taking part in a static ride at a local shop, there were multiple ways people could take part.

Here are some of the Rotary clubs who took part in the 2023 event to raise money for prostate cancer.

BANGOR ROTARY CLUB

As well as a static ride, Bangor Rotary led two different groups of enthusiastic cyclists on two routes across Bangor, Northern Ireland, with the well wishes of Deputy Mayor Hannah Irwin.

THE ROTARY CLUB OF THE DEEPINGS

The Peterborough-based Rotary club held a static ride outside their local Tesco to raise money for Prostate Cancer UK.

ROTARY CLUB OF MONTROSE

Montrose Rotary Club's Rotary Ride event saw over 40 participants of all ages show up to take part in the three routes available across Angus, Scotland.

ROTARY CLUB OF BEXHILL

The staff of Tesco in Ravenside, Bexhill, welcomed members of Bexhill Rotary as they attempted to cycle the distance from London to Paris over three static bikes – a target they exceeded!

ROTARY CLUB OF HELSTON-LIZARD

Members of Helston-Lizard Rotary took on the Bissoe Trail, a 22-mile coast to coast cycle trail across Cornwall, enjoying a great day of fellowship and fun.

PEEBLES ROTARY CLUB & INNERLEITHEN, WALKERBURN & TRAQUAIR ROTARY

The two Scottish Rotary clubs took to their bikes for a 50-mile cycle across beautiful Scottish countryside. The ride was completed in four-and-a-half hours.

ROTARY CLUB OF ARBROATH

Members of Arbroath Rotary cycled the 22-mile route to Monifieth, Scotland, to raise hundreds of pounds for Prostate Cancer Scotland.

ROTARY CLUB OF MID WIRRAL

Mid Wirral Rotary on Merseyside wanted a challenge for the 2023 Rotary Ride so they took on the Lakes and Dales Loop – a 197-mile circuit of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales.

ROTARY CLUB OF RUGBY

Outside the Asda supermarket in Rugby town centre, Warwickshire, Rugby Rotary Club members took turns on the static bike as well as handing out prostate cancer leaflets.

BRIDGWATER ROTARY CLUB

In Somerset, 35 people participated in Bridgwater Rotary's static ride, racking up 263 miles in eight hours for Somerset Prostate Support Association.

ROTARY CLUB OF UPPER EDEN

In Cumbria, over 70 cyclists took part in Upper Eden Rotary's second annual Charity Fun Bike Ride whilst taking in the natural beauty of the Upper Eden Valley and Westmorland Dales countryside. ●

GOING WILD ABOUT RE-WILDING



ROTARY clubs in Essex have joined forces as part of a re-wilding project.

Yarra Farm in Colchester is a 15-acre site which provides day care and animal husbandry opportunities for special needs adults.

In 2022, owner, Sue Middleton agreed to donate two to three acres of the farm for a four Rotary club re-wilding project which would involve four special needs schools.

The first task was to fence the area – to stop the grazing sheep and alpaca entering – and then plant over 200 hedgerow saplings, which were provided under The Queen's Green Canopy Scheme to create an "insect highway".

The special needs children helped with the planting and then turned to

building four insect hotels. They are now in the process of creating sensory planting beds. Rotarian Iain Jack stepped forward to learn beekeeping skills and is steadily restoring three beehives. The first batch of wild honey has been harvested and tastes divine.

With the help of donations from local businesses and a District Grant, the Colchester Rotary clubs have now started on phase two of the project.

This involves the creation of a wheelchair friendly path and a 'relaxing and educational' area.

Once again, Rotary used its business contacts to obtain discounted aggregate from Silverton's and a digger and dumper from Cadman Construction to move the 14 tonnes of aggregate to the re-wilding site.

In October, the winding 80-metre path was laid in a record time. This was all made possible through the Corporate Social Responsibility programme of Ellisons Solicitors who sent 10 volunteers to help Rotarians with the task.

Rotarian Peter Herring, project lead for the four Rotary club project (Colchester, Colchester Forum, Halstead & Colchester Camulos) said: "It is pleasing to see how Rotary's influence was able to bring businesses and volunteers together to support an environmental project which also provides an enormous benefit to the special needs community.

"The next step is for the children to plant wildflower seeds in the spring and then observe the emerging wildlife." ●





100 YEARS OF WATFORD ROTARY

"I WAS IMMEDIATELY INVOLVED, AND BECAME EXCITED BY ALL THE DIFFERENT AVENUES AND MEANS OF RAISING FUNDS FOR WATFORD AND SOUTH-WEST HERTFORDSHIRE, AS WELL AS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS."

IN February, Watford Rotary will be celebrating 100 years of service to the community in Hertfordshire.

This was a time which marked a dramatic rise in the number of Rotary clubs in Great Britain & Ireland in the wake of the First World War.

1920's

In its first 25 years, Watford Rotary sponsored a new club in St Albans, endowed a ward in the Peace Memorial Hospital, ran a car service for the blind and started an International Friendship Club for refugees following World War Two.

Michael Hammond is this year's club President, and Watford Rotary's longest-serving member.

He said: "I first joined a charitable organisation after serving my National Service in Egypt and at 20, in order to maintain the camaraderie of the RAF, I joined Round Table, where unhappily, at 40, we had to resign to join a similar group called Rotary International.

"In Round Table which, incidentally, was founded by a Watford Rotarian, we rushed around digging gardens, painting houses, and heading up the Watford Carnival dressed like Pirates.

"Rotary was, and is, more forward-looking and measured in its approach to problems across the world, being involved in so many projects to do with education, earthquakes, floods, hardship, medical projects, plagues and tsunamis.

"I was immediately involved, and became excited by all the different avenues and means of raising funds for

Watford and south-west Hertfordshire, as well as for the international projects.

An example of Watford Rotary's involvement in Europe followed World War Two when the club helped thousands of misplaced people who found themselves on the wrong side of the borders between the western Allies and Communist countries. Architect and Rotarian Henry Colbeck worked hard to repatriate people back to their homelands.

Today, explained Michael Hammond, Watford Rotary features a mixture of talents and professions. He added: "During my 48 years of membership, I have met and worked with some very clever people and enjoyed many wonderful visits abroad and in the UK.

"There, our universal connections are instant and effective in developing a network of like-minded individuals who work together to tackle local, national and international needs through projects that cross borders, as well as work closely in our own community here in Watford and south-west Hertfordshire.

"For example, sponsoring local schools to develop creativity, together with specific charitable fundraising such as the ShelterBox appeal."

In turning the clock back over the past century, the Watford Rotary President reflected on the club's support for the Jarrow marches in the 1920s, and its campaigning for a Peace Memorial Hospital in the 1930s, which is now a hospice.

1940's

In the 1940s, despite wartime restrictions, the Rotary club was able to give substantial post war donations, for example to the 'Help Holland Appeal'. "This was an appeal which, I recall, being spoken of years later by individuals who had benefited from the food drops which Rotary had facilitated," added Michael.

Since its inception Watford Rotary has supported its local hospital and in the 1940s, Ward C became the Rotary Club of Watford Ward.

In response to the recovery of Europe after the war, the club organised equipment and clothing to be sent to refugee camps in Germany and Czechoslovakia (now known as the Czech Republic and Slovakia).

1950's

By 1955, Watford Rotary had a membership 67-strong which started up a Meals on Wheels project, an international languages club and supported holidays to Worthing for the underprivileged.

1960's

During the 1960s, the club provided an ambulance for the St John's Ambulance and funded a technical training award alongside other donations.

1970's

And in the 1970s, Watford Rotary was very active socially organising one of the highlights of the year, the Beggars Ball

at Watford Town Hall which brought in large donations from industry and individuals.

1980's

Michael Hammond said that in the 1980s he and other Rotarians were active with driving for the blind and helping rebuild the Blind Centre, as well as supporting Talking Books for the Blind.

2000's

Looking abroad, the club actively fund-raised for Nepal when the Himalayan country suffered a massive earthquake, and provided help for the Philippines following the tsunami.

More recently, the club has been supporting vulnerable people in the Watford area affected by the cost of living crisis. "There are many ways we have approached fund-raising, but I am pleased to report the camaraderie I found when I first joined remains in the way we work together, as does the need in the modern world for organisations such as Rotary to give to causes," added Michael.

"The rather small Rotary Wheel badge we wear with much pride is an instant introduction to millions of like-minded people world-wide and I feel privileged to be a part of an organisation that has changed and evolved and as we enter the Watford Club's 100th year, yet still has opportunity to continue to act to support, and impact the world and local community." ●



JOIN ROTARY AND SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY.

Joining **Rotary** gives you the platform to make a difference through volunteering. If you've got a cause you're passionate about, or a project you want to get off the ground, **Rotary** is the place to turn your ideas into action.



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**BARRY
RASSIN**

**ROTARY FOUNDATION
TRUSTEE CHAIR**

MAKE THE FOUNDATION YOURS

THE new year ushers in promise and hope, a time to resolve to do things differently. We can do more than just hope for the best. We can take steps — big and small — to make changes in every aspect of our lives, including Rotary.

Here's a New Year's resolution to consider: Remember that The Rotary Foundation belongs to you. The Foundation is a global force, doing our good work in the world. Just like anything that belongs to you, it requires care and attention. How can we do this?

First, get to know your Foundation better this year. Did you know that in 2023, the Foundation achieved a maximum four-star rating from Charity Navigator for the 15th consecutive year?

This places your Foundation among the world's top charities.

Why do we consistently receive this honour? It's because we are financially strong, have a broad reach, and are highly effective with the gifts you give: 91 per cent of funds are allocated to programme awards and operations.

Another way to engage with your Foundation is to support it through a

gift, every year. We've set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$500 million this year, and I'm confident that, with your support, we will achieve it.

This year, I'm counting on those Rotarians and Rotaractors who have not yet contributed to make their first gift. Because The Rotary Foundation is an excellent steward, you can be confident that your gift will make a difference, whether it's in polio eradication, literacy initiatives, peace education, or any other area in which we excel.

In 2024, resolve to share the Foundation with others. The Foundation is too great to keep to ourselves. Spread the word during your fundraisers and events.

Let the public know that The Rotary Foundation plays a significant role in everything we do, including in our many partnerships. Anyone can support the Foundation, even people who are not in Rotary.

Lastly this year, take action. Your Foundation is waiting for you to roll

up your sleeves and make use of its resources to make the world a better place. Seek out global or district grant projects. Consider partnering with a Rotaract club in 2024 to support a grant or collaborate on one.

Team up with Rotary and Rotaract clubs in your area to plan your biggest million dollar dinner fundraiser or End Polio Now event.

Whatever you decide to do in 2024, commit to keeping our Foundation in your plans. I can't wait to hear about all the great things we will accomplish this year. ●

FIND OUT MORE ➤

rotarygbi.org/foundation



Do you have macular degeneration?

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PROMOTING POSITIVE PEACE TO CREATE HOPE IN THE WORLD

The 2024 Rotary Presidential Peace Conference is due to feature speakers from around the world providing their insight on how Rotary can work together to make a change.

THE 9th and 10th of February 2024 will see inspirational figures from the world of Rotary International and beyond gather in London for the 2024 Rotary International Presidential Peace Conference.

Rotary International President, Gordon McInally, was approached nearly two years ago to support a Presidential Peace Conference during his Presidential tenure, with the conference theme being 'Promote and Strengthen Positive Peace'.

Gordon was fully supportive of the idea, arranging it for February 2024 so it takes place during Rotary's Peace and Conflict Resolution month and also so it can tie in with Gordon's Presidential theme of 'Create Hope in the World'.

A range of high-profile speakers are set to give their views at the event, which is taking place at the headquarters of The International Maritime Organisation.

Speakers at the event will include:

- Steve Killelea, the founder of the Institute for Economics and Peace.
- Sir Malcolm Rifkind, former Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament.

- Dr Fatou Bensouda, High Commissioner of The Gambia to the UK and former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

- Georgieva Bokova, the immediate past Director-General of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Rotary International has always been intent on using Rotary's expertise and resources to promote peace since the organisation was founded back in 1905.

From being a direct inspiration in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to creating the Rotary Centers for International Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution in 1999, Rotary's peacebuilding efforts have been consistently impactful up to the present day.

Rotary International entered a Strategic Partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) in 2017 and both organisations have been exploring ways they can promote the idea of 'Positive Peace'.

Positive Peace moves the idea of 'peace' away from just the absence of violence and instead lays the groundwork for the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain

peaceful societies.

Delegates attending the conference will be given detailed information, including case studies, about how they can use the framework of Positive Peace and Create Hope in the World.

There will also be music and dance performances at the conferences, art forms that have been historically integral to the promotion of peace.

A team led by David Johnson, Liaison with The Lord Mayor of The City of London, is due to present the Rotary International Board with the full programme for the conference which will become available soon.

Amongst the many Rotary delegates from across the world will of course be RI President Gordon McInally, who said when revealing his Presidential themes: "Rotary helps create the conditions for peace, opportunity, and a future worth living.

"By continuing what we do best, by remaining open and willing to change, and by keeping our focus on building peace in the world and within ourselves, Rotary helps create a more peaceful world — a more hopeful world." ●

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rotarypeaceconference.london

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AN ACT OF **KINDNESS**

Thousands of people across London sleeping rough now have essential gear for keeping warm thanks to Françoise Call's project, KindWinter.

| STORY BY **GEORGE BICKNELL** |

FRANCOISE CALL, a member of the London Rotary Club, has been leading a team of dedicated volunteers as part of the KindWinter project to provide immediate protective gear to the homeless population of the capital.

Using negotiating skills gained from holding multiple managerial positions in the health and housing industries, Françoise works with multiple non-government organisations, such as The Salvation Army and local churches, bringing them on board to distribute the essential provisions provided by KindWinter.

KindWinter is a charitable project drawing on the team's experience of mountaineering, outdoor industry, housing, health, homelessness and scaling to provide essential equipment to those sleeping rough.

It is completely run by volunteers with no overheads reliant on individuals and companies donating to KindWinter with 100% of donations going to the homeless.

Françoise, originally from South Pacific island of New Caledonia, has lived in London for over 40 years dedicating much of that time engaged in a variety of charity work. She has been particularly struck by the plight of homeless people where she lives.

She said: "I live in Chelsea, one of the most expensive parts of London and the world. I get off the tube and see people on the pavement. I just can't believe we have a society that has allowed that."

Françoise is also an experienced mountaineer, being the first ever woman to hold the role of Honorary Secretary of The Alpine Club. It's some of these experiences which have given Françoise an understanding for the plight of those sleeping on the

streets. She explained: “I know what it is like to sleep outside, and I know the kind of suffering that it can engender. It’s not just the possibility of getting pneumonia, it’s also the important aspect of sleep deprivation because when you’re cold you can’t sleep – it physically hurts.”

“I know exactly what’s happening because I’ve done it, but even when I do it it’s not really comparable because I know I’ve got a warm bed in a few days, and I have the best kit possible – they don’t.”

She remembers a moment in February 2020, where she got to witness the grim reality of being homeless.

“It was one February, it was -10°C in London, we had young men coming to the Methodist church where I was volunteering, who were homeless, and their skin was raw from the cold.”

“Our cupboards were bare so I had nothing to give them, and it was then I realised that there must be a way to provide the goods we need specifically for the homeless.”

Sleeping bags are like gold on the streets. Very few are donated to charities as members of the public rarely have spare ones compared to coats and blankets.

After having no luck with reaching out to outdoor brands for assistance, Françoise took matters into her own hands with the help of her previous Rotary club – The Rotary Club of Mayfair.

“I remember saying ‘let’s just fundraise and buy in large numbers’ and my goal at the time was just to fill the cupboards of my local homelessness day centre.”

“We fund-raised so well that we got more than for just one centre, so we gave them out to other homeless centres and it just grew from there.”

The growth of this project eventually led to Françoise and her team reaching a deal with Mountain Warehouse who donated sleeping bags as well as warehouse space and transport for the ones KindWinter buys.

KindWinter now has a van supplied by Mountain Warehouse which was recently used to distribute over 1,000 sleeping bags across London.

Several important fundraising events, sleeping bags delivered and a move to a new Rotary club (Rotary Club of London) later, Françoise’s original fund-raising project is going strong as KindWinter.

KindWinter maintains a strong Rotary connection even as it grows and has become its own project outside the organisation. The trustees of the new entity are all Rotarians. Michael Carras is a trustee of the Rotary Club of Westminster International Trust Fund, a registered charity that collects KindWinter’s funds. Gordon Moulds is the ex-CEO of KidsOut.

It’s the continued collaboration between Rotarians who have a passion for helping the homeless that Françoise is aiming to encourage in order to increase the scale of projects like KindWinter.

One example of such collaboration, thanks to a letter written in the Rotary magazine this summer, is the co-operation with Rucksacks4Homeless in Halifax, created and run by Hazel Brindle.

KindWinter donated immediately

100 sleeping bags to the project and introduced Mountain Warehouse to the project.

Françoise added: “It is very much a two-way stream. Hazel has some very good ideas to help the homeless which one day we might implement on a wider scale, we have been able to bring her some other ways of doing business.”

“I would absolutely love to have a way to connect Rotary further in the UK regarding homelessness because there’s so much more we could do if we helped each other and shared ideas.” ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

francoiseccall@yahoo.co.uk
kindwinter.com

“SLEEPING BAGS ARE LIKE GOLD ON THE STREETS. VERY FEW ARE DONATED TO CHARITIES AS MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC RARELY HAVE SPARE ONES COMPARED TO COATS AND BLANKETS.”





GIVE SOMEONE A WARM WELCOME THIS WINTER!

Rotarians nationwide have been opening the doors of local spaces to anyone struggling during the cost-of-living crisis.

AS of 2023, over 14.4 million people across the UK live in poverty and over 7 million people experience chronic loneliness.

Food prices are still rising and, when the clocks go back, the evenings get darker and the temperature drops, it can feel especially stressful and lonely for those already struggling to stay mentally and financially afloat.

Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland is aiming to help give those people somewhere to feel less alone as the official Volunteer Partner for the 2023/24 Warm Welcome Spaces campaign.

The Warm Welcome Space campaign, delivered by Good Faith Partnership, was set up in the winter of 2022 to respond to the worst cost-of-living crisis in 70 years.

The idea was to open local communities by giving everyone free access to a 'Warm Welcome Space' where they could keep warm and connect with others.

A Warm Welcome Space could be any community building that can help provide comfort and warmth to visitors, this could include places such as libraries, schools, churches, and community cafes.

The campaign was a great success,

providing somewhere to go for over half a million people across 7,000 Warm Welcome Spaces, with several Rotary clubs offering their help.

For the 2023/24 Warm Welcome Spaces campaign, Rotary GB&I wanted to offer even more of our volunteering expertise, so became the campaign's official Volunteer Partner.

Rotary has already used its knowledge to help and guide Warm Welcome, collaborating with them on the design of their volunteering materials.

The campaign is already having a positive response such as in Orpington, Southeast London, where volunteers from the Orpington District Rotary E-Club and Orpington Crofton Rotary Club have set up their Warm Welcome Space in their local Methodist church.

Joanne Gregory, President of the Orpington District E-Club, said: "Our weekly hub is a haven of warmth and camaraderie, where we gather to share a cup of tea and a slice of cake with our community members.

"We extend a helping hand by offering energy advice, distributing blankets to those in need, and even sharing our crocus corms. But most importantly, we cherish the time we spend

sitting and chatting with our visitors, sharing laughter and forging connections."

David Barclay, Campaign Director for Warm Welcome, shared his excitement for the partnership, stating: "Volunteers are the lifeblood of Warm Spaces, but recruiting and retaining them is also one of the biggest challenges for local groups. That's why we're so excited by the potential of our partnership with Rotary.

Rotary GB&I General Secretary, Amanda Watkin, commented: "What we are finding with Warm Welcome Spaces is that we can bring our time and talent into this new area.

"We can either volunteer our time and get involved ourselves - pitch up and be that person who is there for the cup of tea and the chat - or we might be identifying spaces to our local communities.

"As far as I'm concerned, this is the partnership of the year, and it's great to connect and make sure everyone has the opportunity to look after one another." ●

FIND OUT MORE ➤

warmwelcome.uk

rotarygbi.org/members/warm-welcome-spaces

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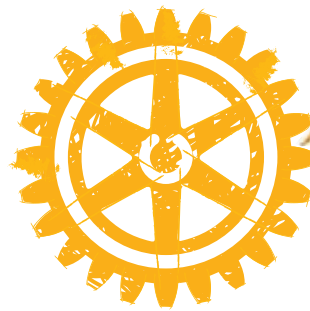
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Rotary



THE ROTARY BRAND: SHAPING A VIBRANT PUBLIC IMAGE

| STORY BY **PHILIP DYER** |
SPECIALIST ADVISER TEAM LEAD, PUBLIC IMAGE

In an age where appearances often shape judgments, it is imperative to understand how Rotary's public image goes beyond mere name recognition.

It is profoundly influenced by the actions of our members, the initiatives they undertake, and their impact on communities, whether local or global.

Recognising that we are People of Action underscores the importance of cultivating a vibrant and standout Rotary public image in this digital age.

So why should your club prioritise public image? Because it can yield numerous benefits for your club:

INCREASED AWARENESS

A stronger public image heightens awareness and understanding of Rotary, making it more appealing to potential members.

MEMBER PRIDE

It fosters a sense of pride among existing members who can see the positive impact their club has on the community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It encourages community members to participate by donating their time and resources, further strengthening Rotary's mission.

DIFFERENTIATION

It sets your club apart from other volunteer opportunities, making Rotary more attractive to those seeking meaningful engagement.

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE TO ENHANCING YOUR CLUB'S PUBLIC IMAGE?

As a Rotary or Rotaract member, you play a pivotal role as an ambassador for our Rotary brand. Here are some strategies to help bolster and make vibrant your club's public image.

WEBSITES

Keep your club's website up to date with engaging content, including images, activities, and volunteer opportunities that attract community members. Link to stories and blog posts on rotary.org that showcase Rotary's global impact.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Leverage the power of social media to reach a wider audience. Share news about your club's projects and invite followers to explore your club's website. Remember, captivating visuals are key in capturing attention in the digital realm.

EVENTS

Organise programmes, events, and service projects tailored to your community's needs, inviting the public to participate and witness Rotary's impact first-hand.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Utilise speaking opportunities in your community to highlight your club's activities and Rotary's mission. Use Rotary-branded PowerPoint templates and high-quality visuals to make your presentations compelling.

THE BRAND CENTRE

An invaluable resource for promoting Rotary and your club. It provides the tools and materials needed to effectively communicate Rotary's message. Plus, it's now more accessible than ever, with no need for logins!

TELL YOUR ROTARY STORY

Remember to hook your audience with your story, detailing your impact and achievements. It's not just about the big cheque photo; it's an action picture illustrating the impact created.

By implementing these strategies, you can successfully promote your club's projects and, in turn, enhance Rotary's public image within your community.

Remember, at our core, we are People of Action, and it's through these actions that we continue to make a lasting impact on the world! ●

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE OUR FUTURE

| STORY BY **TERRY BOLTON** |
PRESIDENT, MIDDLESBROUGH ERIMUS ROTARY

ANYONE who has been a member of Rotary in recent times will be aware of the challenges faced by an ageing membership and the difficulties of recruiting the next generation of members.

Over the past couple of years there have been signs that doors of opportunity may be opening.

Middlesbrough Erimus Rotary has been working closely with Middlesbrough College, a further education facility, where between 12,000 and 14,000 students aged between 16 to 64-years-old follow a variety of vocational and retraining courses each year.

In the initial stages of our relationship with the college, its Principal and Chief Executive, Zoe Lewis, explained that their ambition was for each student to perform some form of positive social action during their two-year course at college.

To our mutual surprise we found a common cause.

Both the college and Rotary seek to develop citizenship and positive change to our local environment and community. Rotary can provide the avenue for part of

that ambition.

This led to college students supporting our tree planting programme.

They also helped the Rotary club to stage an inaugural Tees Heritage Walk along the banks of the River Tees.

In May 2023, we set up ten 'heritage hotspots' marked with QR Codes which the students developed as part of their course work.

At particular points, walkers could learn something of the remarkable industrial history and archaeology along the path.

Although only 150 fundraisers took part, they raised over £600 for their respective charities.

Students and staff will partner with us on this once again in May.

The partnership with Middlesbrough College has strengthened and they have now joined Middlesbrough Erimus Rotary as corporate members.

This, in turn, has made possible the formation of a breakfast meeting at their Waterside Brasserie Café where our aim is to create a viable social action group meeting once a month which is directly linked to Erimus.

What we are seeking is bringing together networking groups of working

people who are focused on positive action. This should produce spin-off business benefits for those involved, as well as for our town's culture and local environment.

It should be noted that charity sectors have also joined us in this endeavor.

The most unexpected reward for this initiative has been as result of the Covid-inspired working from home, which is now a familiar part of life for many people. While this routine has several advantages, it also brings significant challenges of its own.

For younger people coming into the workplace directly from further education, working from home means they are working without a community.

They have no direct sharing of experience or personal camaraderie. Here is where Rotary may offer a solution.

Meeting regularly with a focus on positive initiatives offers a community to work from home individuals.

It becomes a place where friends can interact and work together for common causes and community benefits.

It just might be that Rotary has a new role in a changing world. ●



"THIS LED TO COLLEGE STUDENTS SUPPORTING OUR TREE PLANTING PROGRAMME. THEY ALSO HELPED THE ROTARY CLUB TO STAGE AN INAUGURAL TEES HERITAGE WALK ALONG THE BANKS OF THE RIVER TEES ."

JOAN'S WEST END DREAM

Rotarian Joan Greening has written for television and many of her stage shows have been performed around the world, including at the Edinburgh Festival. But in a first for the talented playwright, she has achieved a life-time dream by having a show staged on London's West End this February.

| STORY BY **DAVE KING** |



THE bright lights of the West End beckon for Rotarian Joan Greening, who has achieved a life's dream by having a show appear at London's West End.



Joan, who has been a Rotarian for 22 years with the Rotary Club of Elthorne-Hillingdon in north-west London, is a published playwright who has been working in theatres all her adult life.

At the Edinburgh Fringe in 2022, Joan met composers Joel Goodman and Jan Osborne who had written the musical *'Alan Turing - A Musical Biography'*.

In need of an extra edge to the production, they asked Joan to write the script and they took the new version back to Edinburgh in August 2023.

There, the show received four five-star reviews and was nominated for a prestigious 'Off West End' award.

She explained: "This musical is a journey through the extraordinary life of Alan Turing.

"Alan was a genius, whose brilliant code-breaking brain saved approximately 14 million lives in World War Two.

"It takes us on a journey through the loss of his closest friend, his romance with a fellow worker, the moment he realises how to beat the Germans, and the growing awareness of his homosexuality. His treatment after the war was truly appalling and this brilliant, funny man was left in despair."

Joan admitted her knowledge of Alan Turing was limited to seeing Benedict Cumberbatch play him in the film *'The Imitation Game'*, so she spent a lot of time reading up about the mathematical genius.

"For the musical, I haven't written him as Benedict Cumberbatch played him. People say he was a funny man who had lots of friends, but someone who also liked to be on his own. You might describe him as an eccentric professor."

After success at the Edinburgh

Festival, Joel and Jan, who also produced the show, then asked Joan if she could lengthen the musical by half an hour.

Now, the show will be opening at Wonderville, Haymarket, on February 27th until March 3rd. It stars Joe Bishop as Alan Turing and Zara Cooke, and is directed by Jane Bowen-Miles.

This is the latest accolade for Joan, whose husband John is also a Rotarian at Elthorne-Hillingdon.

She has previously written extensively for television and theatre, creating the ITV situation comedies *'The Cabbage Patch'* and *'Troubles and Strife'*.

Writing a script for a musical was a totally new departure for Joan who regularly takes period dramas to the Edinburgh Festival and on tour around the country.

She is now working on another musical with Joel and Jan about Nellie Bly, an American journalist who made her name for a record-breaking trip around the world in 72 days to emulate Jules Verne's fictional character, Phileas



Fogg. That is likely to be performed at the Edinburgh Festival this year.

"It is all very different for me," said Joan. "It's quite challenging because it means working as a team which I'm not used to doing.

"That has been a learning experience.

"It's fair to say, too, that I am no longer young, but it's been energising to work with other people, and that's really good for me. I'm enjoying it."

In a 40-year career, Joan has written around 50 plays, including comedies, tracing the lives of many historical characters.

"I would think a lot of them have gone out of print or are old fashioned. In fact, I wrote a play in the 1980s called *'Continental Quilt'*. Well, no-one calls them that anymore, do they?"

Joan draws her inspiration from reading, and she is also very fond of art. "I don't think I'll ever have nothing to write about, I've got lots of ideas in my head.

"I am writing a one-man show for a young actor at the moment. He's very

young and talented, and I thought that for his character he needs to be somebody quite nasty. So I've written the play about a painter, and he is nasty."

As for the accolade of her play appearing in London's West End, Joan is fairly laid back about it publicly – though privately one suspects that she is bursting with pride.

"I've never been overly ambitious," she admitted. "I've been very happy, just doing what I do. I've had a lot of plays published. I have a steady income from it. And I've been very happy with that.

"Both Joel and Jan are much younger than I am, and I'm just so pleased that they're getting what they want. For me, it's absolutely marvellous, and I am thrilled to bits, but I'm more thrilled for them."

Joan acknowledges that Rotary plays an important part in her life.

She has been the driving force behind an Interact club at Northwood School which is so popular there is a waiting list.

She has also been working with other Rotarians on a reading project with

students at the Middlesex school.

Asked about her favourite play of all time, Joan replies Shakespeare's *'Midsummer Night's Dream'*.

"Why? Because I think it's the best plotted of Shakespeare's plays and a lot of the language is wonderful.

"It also has my favourite line from Shakespeare which could not be more apt at this time. It's when Puck says: "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

"You look around the world today and think, why can't people just live in peace?

"We're given a wonderful world to live in and, for some reason, we can't live in peace, can we? It's so very sad." ●

FOR TICKETS ➔

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ROTARY'S IMPACT THROUGH CONNECTIONS

BY JANNINE BIRTWISTLE |
SPECIALIST TEAM LEAD, HUMANITARIAN SERVICE

NEVER underestimate the potential for Rotary connections to increase our positive impact on the lives of others in the short and long term.

A Rotarian from Westbourne in Dorset was having lunch with his son who works for a London city bank and was looking for a charity to support. His dad suggested supporting young people through Rotary.

That simple conversation led to:

- a £50,000 donation:
 - to support local young people aged 16 who were facing financial barriers affecting their learning, education, training and employment opportunities.
 - targeted for young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and young people leaving care.
- An excellent working relationship with:
 - the council.
 - social services.
 - social housing association.
 - community-based organisations.
- Club members collaborating to make this work including:
 - relationship leads with the donor, council, the housing association; and other organisations.
 - forming an interview panel.
 - establishing mentors.

Here are a few success stories from Westbourne Rotary Club and what the funding provided:

- Funding a camera, case and insurance for Ataya, a young asylum seeker from Sudan, who is pursuing a photography career.
- Phoebe, a 24-year-old single mum who suffered many obstacles and disadvantages in life, is exceptionally bright despite lacking self-confidence and struggling with anxiety. With funding and the support of a Rotary mentor, Phoebe passed the foundation year in law at Bournemouth College with top marks and is now at Bournemouth University and her self-confidence has grown enormously.
- Oscar, a young musician from a dysfunctional family, had mediocre GCSE results but with a strong performance in music which is his main goal in life. His initial application was for a computer but having been given a second-hand one he instead applied for a Fender Stratocaster electric guitar. Having succeeded well in his first year his application was successful, and the club continues to mentor him.

These have been life challenges for young people presenting obstacles to them completing what they had set out to do. In most instances Rotary has been able to stay in touch, mentoring them as they strive to overcome those hurdles.

Blown away by the success of how £50,000 was used to positively impact young people's lives, the donor has given a further £100,000 for the club to continue its work. ●



CARAVAN WITH ROTARY

WHO would have thought when Stuart Sutcliffe gathered together a few of his Rotarian friends in the summer of 1967 to take his caravan to the Rotary International Convention in Nice, France, that 56 years later you would still have a band of Rotarians, under the banner the International Caravanning Fellowship of Rotarians (ICFR).

Indeed, in the summer of 2017 to celebrate 50 years of ICFR, members arranged a similar rally to Nice.

Today, the fellowship is in good order with over 500 members from across the UK, regularly getting together on both sides of the Channel, enjoying well organised rallies in different locations.

Similar groups have been established all over the globe including France, the Netherlands, Germany, North America, New Zealand and Australia.

With different continents, different languages, the fellowship revolves around one very simple concept, as ICFR President, Derek Rogers says: "A great opportunity to visit new places, whilst enjoying one's caravanning passion - and sharing the full friendship and fellowship of like-minded Rotarians."

Membership of ICFR is open to Rotarians and their partners, to family

**"TODAY, THE FELLOWSHIP IS
IN GOOD ORDER WITH OVER
500 MEMBERS FROM
ACROSS THE UK."**

members of Rotarians and to alumni of Rotary programmes.

Recently, we registered 2,896 unit-nights on our rallies and since most units contain two people that amounts to over 5,500 person-nights, which is not bad as a measure of member participation.

All you need is a caravan or a motorhome/campervan plus the enthusiasm for meeting new people and visiting new places.

A subscription of £10 gives you the opportunity to go on ICFR rallies, receive a copy of our twice-yearly online magazine 'News & Views' and much more, especially fun and fellowship on wheels!

'News & Views' editor, Maggie Ambrose, is always open to receiving stories of Rotary interests, slanted naturally towards the caravan world and, of course, towards encouraging more Rotarians to join us.

The rally year of 2023 has been very successful, recovering from the effects of

the pandemic. Two European rallies were completed in France in the Loire and in Northern and Central Spain.

A total of 20 rallies have been completed across the UK mainland, from Lake Coniston in Cumbria to Devon; Northumberland to Sussex; Suffolk to Llangollen in Snowdonia - all with full programmes and all a great success.

Looking ahead to 2024 plans are already in hand for more rallies for ICFR members to join and participate in, including Northern Ireland and the Orkneys. The booking procedure is well organised, with a high percentage completed online.

We are trying to get our message across to Rotarians who own a caravan or a motorhome to understand how great ICFR is and encourage them to join us.

In September, we had a stand in the House of Friendship at the Rotary Action Summit in Manchester where many of our promotional leaflets were distributed. We hope that *Rotary* magazine readers will follow up and make enquiries. We will be delighted to talk to you. ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

icfrrotarianscaravanning.com
ICFRmember@outlook.com



Get reading with Rotary

A warm welcome to the Rotary Book Club where we will travel the length and breadth of the Earth, move through space and time, solve mysteries, and laugh and cry together.

| BECKY TURNER |



I AM Becky Turner, and I am very excited about our new book club – let me tell you a little about me and the clubs that I belong to, and I'll then explain how Rotary Book Club will work.

Unsurprisingly, I'm a Rotarian and a founding member of Kings Hill Rotary Club (KHRC). I've always loved reading, and some 13 or so years ago was introduced by a friend to a book club at a local library.

The experience of reading the same book as others and then discussing it was far more powerful than I could ever have imagined; it is fascinating what different people make of the same story. I discovered authors I'd never heard of, read others I thought I'd have no interest in, and can honestly say that the experience broadened my perspective, changing the way that I read.

When I realised several fellow Rotarians were keen readers, I had the idea to form our own KHRC book club, which I'm proud to say turned 10 years old in May 2023. It has become a much-loved social activity and to date we have read 83 books, spanning many genres and authors. Everyone's opinion is valued, and it's often been the case that a book has caused us to reflect on our lives and challenge our views.

It is no exaggeration to say that being a member of a book club is a journey of discovery; not only about the

subject matter of the book but also about yourself.

I'm delighted to share this wonderful activity with you all.

I can see tremendous potential to expand it in many ways, but let's get the basics right first. Rotary Readers will evolve over time with your feedback; this club belongs to us all and I hope that you enjoy being part of it.

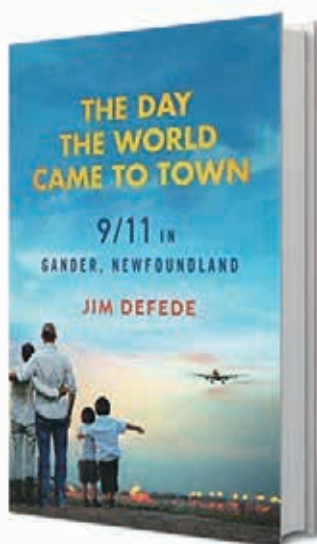
So, how will Rotary Book Club work?

Each edition of the magazine will announce a new book for us to read – this time, I'm releasing the first and second for those of you who like to take your time over a book or wish to borrow it from the library – you'll always know the next two books.

Candidates for your votes for the third book are given below and your choice will be announced in the April magazine. We'll all read the same book, and I'll be waiting to hear your views

and score out of ten either by email to: bookclub@rotarygbi.org I'll then sum up everyone's views for you to read in the next edition of the magazine. Simple!

Please send me your book recommendations for us to read and I'll produce a short-list of three books for you to vote between each time. You can either vote by email or on the social media pages. We will only be reading books that are also available in an audio version to make our club as inclusive as possible for those who have sight issues.

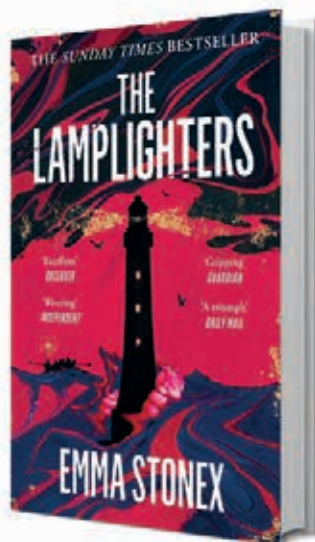


The Day the World Came to Town *By Jim DeFede*

Most of us will remember where we were on September 11th, 2001, and saw images we will probably never forget. What we won't tend to think of is what happened to the planes that were mid-flight at the time when US airspace was closed – where did they go?

This book tells the story of how the small community of Gander, Newfoundland, came together to look

after the people on no less than thirty-eight aircraft. A quote on the back of the book states "An inspiring true story that spotlights acts of kindness in a world shocked and saddened by unimagined violence". Let me know what you think! Please send me your feedback by February 15th for the April magazine.



The Lamplighters *By Emma Stonex*

We move from true events to a story inspired by real events. The following synopsis is from the back cover of the book:

"Cornwall, 1972. Three keepers vanish from a remote lighthouse, miles from the shore. The entrance door is locked from the inside. The clocks have stopped. The table is set for a meal left uneaten. What happened to those three

men, out on the tower? Can their secrets ever be recovered from the waves?

Twenty years later, a writer approaches the women they left behind, determined to solve the puzzle.

Helen, Jenny and Michelle should have been united by the tragedy; instead, it drove them apart. But only in confronting their darkest fears can the truth begin to surface..."

Please let me have your feedback by May 15th for the July magazine. Let me know if you guessed the ending!

Please vote for one of the following for our third book:

The Secret History *By Donna Tartt*

Widely considered a modern classic.

10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World *By Elif Shafak*

Profound and highly rated.

The Madness of July *By James Naughtie*

The first Will Flemmyng thriller.

VOTE HERE 

bookclub@rotarygbi.org



The Funny Side of Fellowship

West Country Rotarian and comedian Tank Sherman has worked his way into a prestigious group of entertainers who share a passion for voluntary work.

| STORY BY **GEORGE BICKNELL** |



IN an historic pub in Kings Cross, London, called The Water Rats, known for hosting musical acts such as Bob Dylan and Oasis, you will find a group of charitable comedians, musicians and TV personalities who make up the Grand Order of Water Rats, one of the UK's most high-profile charities.

Starting in 1889, the Grand Order of Water Rats uses the talent and caregiving nature of its members to organise events that raise money for those less fortunate, mainly within the entertainment industry.

Previous members include comedy legends such as Charlie Chaplin and Tommy Cooper, with King Charles – an honorary Rotarian – being a known supporter of the group.

Among the esteemed entertainers in the pub's lodge room where the group meets, now sits a recent addition to this esteemed gathering – comedian and Rotarian Graham Lovegrove, better known by his stage name Tank Sherman.

A dedicated member of the Liskeard and Looe Rotary Club in Cornwall, Graham is relishing the opportunity to be part of this charitable group of which several of his comedy heroes are previous and current members.

He said: "When you walk into the actual lodge room there's photos everywhere and you can just feel their presence. It's an absolute honour to be in there.

"You do look at some of those people and think 'Why me?' but it's all the same goal of working together to benefit people that can't afford much.

"What they do is amazing and if I can be a little part of it that's great."

It's hard to believe that Graham's decades-long Tank Sherman character was never meant to last more than one performance at a holiday park talent show in Weymouth nearly 30 years ago.

Graham, 65, remembers: "I decided to go into the main entertainment hall as they were having the auditions for a talent contest. I was sat at the back and, I must admit I'd had a bit to drink, but I found it hilarious.

"One of the team members came up to me, asked what I do, asked what caravan I was in, and then said, 'Well you can't come in here and laugh at people so

you're on third tonight."

A hurried trip with his wife to the costume shop later and soon he was onstage with a soldier's helmet, sequined shirt, and a dustbin hung around his torso. This look also brought about the first time he was introduced with his now iconic name... almost.

Graham recalls: "I got myself together and dressed up as a stupid soldier. As I came onstage the girl said, 'Ladies and gentlemen we've got a Sherman Tank coming onstage' and I said, 'No no no, tell them my name is Tank Sherman!'"

After winning the talent contest and surprising friends and family when his picture was published in the local paper, a friend of Graham's decided to put him forward for another competition.

Graham continues: "I won that and there was an agent in the crowd who came up to me and said, 'Here's my card, would you like to work?' that was it really."

What followed was an eventful career in comedy which saw Graham bringing joy to people up and down the country, whether it was from the stages of clubhouses or theatres to prime-time television.

Despite his busy schedule, Graham has always had a place in his heart for Rotary since he joined the organisation back in the mid-2000s.

He still vividly remembers the moment he was officially invited into the organisation by his friend John O'Driscoll after a performance at the Babbacombe Theatre in Torquay.

He recalls: "I went out and got a big round of applause.

"Nobody had left and John O'Driscoll was there who came up onstage, told them all about me, and then presented me with my honorary membership.

"It was a fabulous night – I think my eyes teared up a little bit!

"Being a part of Rotary is special and I don't think people realise just how much Rotary does."

Whether it's with his Rotary club, with the Grand Order of Water Rats, or if he's putting on a charity performance to benefit a local organisation, Graham has always prioritised giving back through his comedy.

"I think because the world is in such a state and with everything on TV now, there's not much good news.

"We've never had bad news like this before and it's my job to take people into a fantasy world of laughter.

"I've always said to the audience that if we could bottle laughter, people would come off antidepressants. If we could have a swig of laughter in the morning, the world would be a better place." ●

"WHEN YOU WALK INTO THE ACTUAL LODGE ROOM THERE'S PHOTOS EVERYWHERE AND YOU CAN JUST FEEL THEIR PRESENCE. IT'S AN ABSOLUTE HONOUR TO BE IN THERE."





THREE GENERATIONS OF WOMEN, ONE ROTARY CLUB

An online Rotary club based in the East Midlands is breaking down boundaries while ensuring the future of Rotary is in safe hands.

| STORY BY **GEORGE BICKNELL** |

SAT on a Zoom call with Nicki Scott, Past-Vice President of Rotary International, are three Northampton-based members of the Rotary E-Club of District 1070. However, this isn't your average set of Rotarians.

These three Rotarians are Angela Woods, her mother Tracy and Angela's 21-year-old daughter Jasmine – three generations of women who are all active members of the same Rotary club.

Angela, one of the club's founding members and its first female president, reveals how reflective this is of the club's multi-generational and gender diversity.

She reveals: "Our club is now over 50% female membership – we all bring

something different and we're all from different walks of life.

"I think it's just the buzz our club gives off really, the way we do Rotary is very hands-on. We find a need, try and fix it and have a great time at the same time."

Nicki, who had the honour of working alongside Rotary International's first female president, Jennifer Jones, is beaming with pride at seeing this level of gender equity in a Rotary club.

Another notable admirer of Angela and her family's efforts is Sylvia Whitlock, the first female president of a Rotary club.

After the Rotary Club of Duarte, California, won a court case which led to Rotary International ending its

restriction on women joining Rotary clubs, Sylvia became the club's President in 1987.

Since then, Sylvia has held a variety of positions within Rotary and continued to be an avid humanitarian.

Joining the family on Zoom, Sylvia says: "It points in the direction of some of the things we can do – we can have a family Rotary."

"The thing about Rotary today is that you don't have to live in the town where your Rotary club is and it's so open. I think it's great you have three members and three generations in the same Rotary club."

All these years after she took Rotary forward into the future, Sylvia is still passionate about women having as

prominent a role in Rotary as their male counterparts.

She comments: "Women used to be cooking, taking care of the kids, and doing all that now they're doctors, they're construction workers, they're everything else that men are.

"There's no reason why, when we talk about service, they shouldn't be able to really work right beside men in service."

Just a few years after the watershed vote to allow the admission of women into Rotary clubs, the number of female Rotarians had reached over 20,000 by 1990 and, by 2020, the number had surpassed 277,000.

Even now, Rotary is still pushing to make sure that it better reflects the communities it serves, with Rotary International President, Gordon McNally, recently emphasising his commitment to continuing Rotary's journey in diversity, equity and inclusion.

Jasmine, who has been involved in Rotary since she was a child thanks to her parents, is incredibly grateful that, because of the work of people like Sylvia, she can be a part of the Rotary family.

On women previously not being able to join Rotary, Jasmine comments: "I think it's the same with a lot of situations that we women weren't allowed to do a lot.

"I mean, it's ridiculous that we weren't allowed to do a lot because, when you actually look at things, we succeed a lot more in certain areas. It's just incredible to be part of it now."

It's not just through its gender diversity that the Rotary E-Club of District 1070 is making sure it's an inclusive environment; Tracy, Angela's mum, is a wheelchair user but through the club's online environment, Tracy was able to feel comfortable and included.

Tracy explained: "Our club makes sure that everybody can access an event - we make sure there are ramps and we make sure that there's a chair that's taken away before you get there so you're not made a spectacle of.

"It's been really good for me and now we've also got another member in a wheelchair because she felt comfortable knowing that we already had somebody like them and that we are all-inclusive.

"It's a whole new family is what it is

- an extended family."

Sylvia agrees that Rotary needs to be taking advantage of modern technology to make Rotary accessible to everyone, saying: "With the pandemic, it's really important that we are able to do those things if we can't meet in person.

"We are now meeting on Zoom, when you are in London and here I am in California, and it's amazing - the technology allows us to do it."

Despite many of their meetings happening online, the Rotary E-Club of District 1070 has given the Woods family and all its other members the opportunity to make a real difference with their projects.

One of the club's most impactful initiatives has been the Coats4Kids project. Jasmine explains: "With mum being a teacher, she obviously sees first-hand the children that come from families that can't necessarily afford certain things.

"We saw this need and we started Coats4Kids. It allows people to buy a voucher which gets sent to a school of their choice to then be given to a parent, so they are able to get a new coat for their child on the website we created."

It's not just locally that the club's impact is reaching. Tracy recalls: "Angela and I both hopped on a plane to Poland and volunteered in a refugee centre that had 5,000 refugees going through a day, it was very humbling to be part of that.

"We had the backing of the club as they had fund-raised for us, but it was very much 'do it and then tell them later!'"

Sylvia smiles hearing the different generations of Rotary telling their stories with pride, remarking: "It's such a thrill to see each generation relating to the needs that there are.

"I am so happy to meet these three ladies and see what is possible.

"When Jennifer Jones said 'let your imagination run', this is what these guys have already done, and now other people can see." ●



WATCH VIDEO

Scan the QR code to watch the video

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Rotary
Great Britain & Ireland



Rotary profile

Find out why our volunteers give up their time to help transform communities.



Name: Jon Magee

Rotary Club: Kimbolton Castle, Bedfordshire

Occupation: Baptist Minister

TELL US ABOUT YOUR NOMADIC LIFE

My dad was in the RAF and I also joined soon after leaving school. The result was that for the first 30 years of my life I was never anywhere more than three years. To date I have lived in 50 homes. By the time I completed secondary schooling I had studied in 14 schools. Where we lived was home, learning to adapt to whatever the circumstances. Living in places where conflict was the norm we had to come to terms with risks the average person could never understand. We lived in Singapore during the riots of the 1950s, Germany at the height of the Cold War, Aden at the time of extreme terrorism, and British evacuation and Cyprus during the military coup and Turkish invasions.

HOW AND WHY DID YOU JOIN ROTARY?

For a number of years I have been impressed as I spent time with Rotarians who in numerous ways demonstrated a sense of community spirit. As I have moved around the world I have discovered how important it is to show

that caring spirit wherever we might be. In addition to that, I have come to appreciate the fellowship that Rotarians share around the meal table. Those are precious moments as each encourages the other. I knew that this was something I wanted to be a part of.

ARE THERE ANY PARALLELS TO BE DRAWN WITH YOUR LIFE AS A CHURCH MINISTER AND ROTARY?

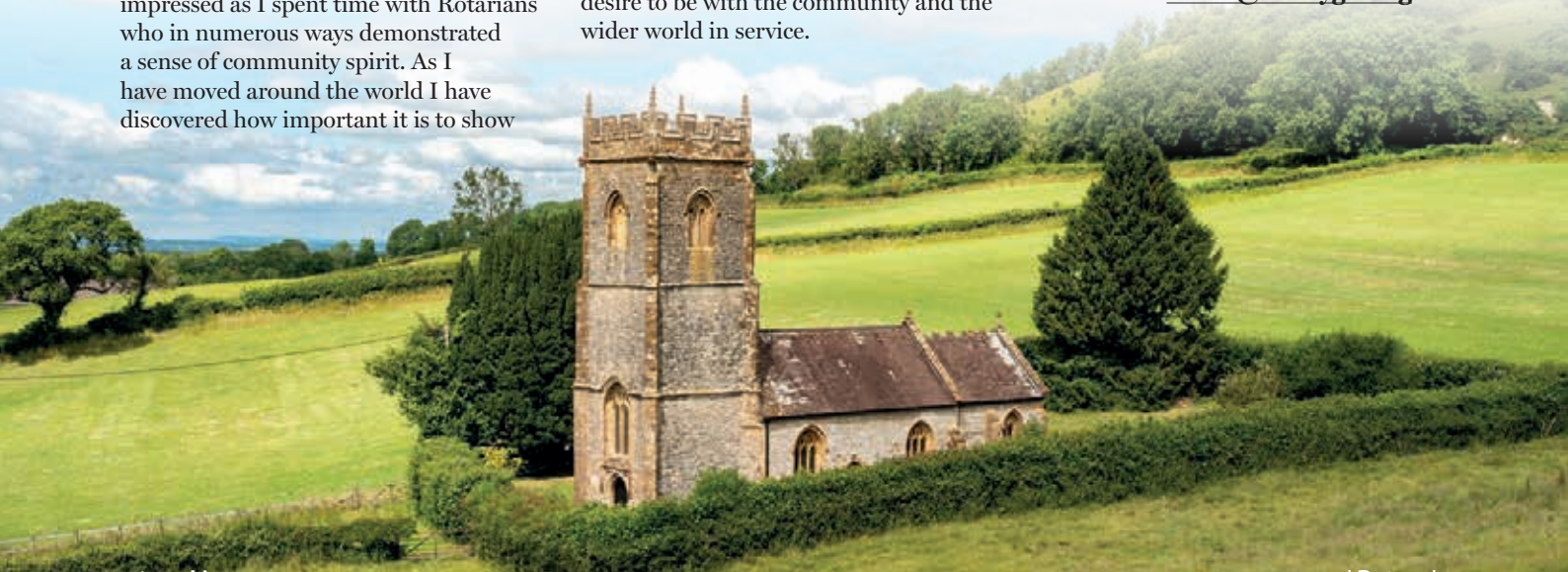
I have been a full-time Minister for over 40 years now. Clearly the central motivation in that context is a deep relationship with the Christ who made the ultimate sacrifice in order that others could know eternal life. As a Minister, I have always believed it is important to be in the community, and for the church to discover ways of giving help to those outside the church. Rotary draws together people who have a variety of beliefs, but what is common is that same desire to be with the community and the wider world in service.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT AS A ROTARIAN?

How do we single out one memorable moment when there has been so many? That seems like a hard choice to make. There can also be such a variety of activities too. I recall when in Wolverhampton that we served the community as we cleared the site of a pop festival, or here in Kimbolton as the club facilitated the country fayre in the grounds of Kimbolton Castle. But above everything, the most memorable moment was to see the support and interest of my fellow Rotarians as I presented my life story. ●

CONTACT US

If you have a story to tell and would like to be featured in *Rotary Profile*, email: editor@rotarygbi.org



Rotary



PEOPLE OF ACTION

**ALL MEMBERS OF ROTARY ARE PEOPLE OF ACTION,
HERE ARE JUST SOME OF THE PROJECTS FROM
AROUND GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND.**

PUTTING THE FUN BACK INTO FUND-RAISING



**"IT'S NOT ONLY ROTARIANS
AND THE CONTESTANTS
WHO HAVE FUN, THE GAME
ALWAYS DRAWS LOTS OF
SPECTATORS, RAISING
THE PROFILE OF ROTARY
ENSURING THEY SEE HOW
MUCH FUN THERE IS TO
FUND-RAISING."**

THERE'S fruit machines...and there's fruit machines - and there's St Anne's-on-the-Sea Rotary's Human Fruit Machine.

Born seven years ago it was certainly not the original, but it is the first human fruit machine to have captured the imaginations of over 2.6 million people.

For this particular machine from Rotarians in north-west England has gone viral on TikTok thanks to the mum of one of the young punters.

Holly Dyson thought it was such fun watching her son having a go on the

machine at the St Anne's Kite Festival in Lancashire that she videoed it and posted on TikTok.

To her great surprise it went viral within a few days and within a week had also been shared over 20,000 times, including by none other than the legendary actor Dick van Dyke, now 97, but a great fan of social media.

Among the hundreds of comments were "too wholesome", "so British", "the funniest thing I've ever seen", "love this, Britain at its best", "why does this have me howling?"

And to those commentators who claimed it was rigged, there were many who retorted with "That's the best part about it!"

It's not only Rotarians and the contestants who have fun, the game always draws lots of spectators, raising the profile of Rotary ensuring they see how much fun there is to fund-raising.

The 'old fruits' always ensure that the kids win a prize, usually a packet of sweets or a small game.

The machine was originally built by one of the Rotary club's friends after they had seen a similar one in operation.

There have already been requests from local organisations for Rotarians to take the game, along with their Whack-a-Duck (RSPCA approved), to other events next summer when there will be new branding for the set.

Who knows just where else these Rotarians will get to as they capitalise on combining such a traditional fund-raising idea with a modern marketing medium as the club approaches its centenary? ●

MAJORCA AWARD



IN Pollensa, a town in the north of Majorca, there is a charity which provides refuge and help for women, both Majorcan and expats, who have been the victims of domestic violence.

It was the creation of an inspirational lady, Susan Mackay who, despite illness and the effects of a terrible road accident, continues to run the charity.

Alan Cook, a past president of North Down Rotary Club in Bangor, Northern Ireland, and his wife Chris have been spending part of the year in Pollensa since 1995 and got to know Susan and the work which her charity undertakes.

They decided to help and at the Rotary club a film night raised €1400 for the charity.

The club was so impressed by Susan's dedication to her work for victims of domestic violence, despite all of the difficulties she had experienced, that it was decided that she should be awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship.

While visiting Majorca, Alan and Chris invited Susan and some friends around and surprised Susan with the presentation of her Fellowship which was totally unexpected but received with delight. ●

ROYAL AUDIENCE

ROTARIAN Steve Maddern of the Rotary Club of Maesteg, South Wales, attended a function at Buckingham Palace where he was introduced to King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

The event was to celebrate the UK's humanitarian response, and Steve was nominated to attend by the Disasters Emergency Committee for a charity concert put on by Maesteg Rotary to raise funds for the Turkey/Syria Earthquake appeal.

The Disasters Emergency Committee is an umbrella group of UK charities which coordinates and launches collective appeals to raise funds to provide emergency aid and rapid relief to people caught up in disasters and humanitarian crises around the world.

As well as humanitarian organisations, Michael Palin, Jon Snow, Paloma Faith, Joanna Lumley, Adrian Lester, Jodie Whittaker and Rory Stewart also attended. ●



WINTER WARMERS

THE Rotary Club of Biggar in South Lanarkshire, Scotland, has been working hard over the winter to help the homeless in Edinburgh.

For the past three years running, the club has run a project called 'Wrap Up Lanarkshire' which involves the collection of unwanted coats, jackets and woollens for adults and teenagers who are homeless.

The project ran from October to the end of November when the Rotary club collected 56 bags of clothing which were donated to the Bethany Christian Trust based in Edinburgh.

The bags contained several hundred items of clothing and will be given to the homeless in Edinburgh which has a significant problem at this time of year.

According to recent figures, the rate of homelessness in Edinburgh has risen by almost a third in a year, although this has been countered by a dramatic fall in the number of people sleeping rough. The city council reported this summer that 3,303 households were assessed as homeless – a 30% increase from a year ago. ●

"ACCORDING TO RECENT FIGURES, THE RATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN EDINBURGH HAS RISEN BY ALMOST A THIRD IN A YEAR."



PEACE THE WORLD OVER

YOUNG people at North Durham Academy in Stanley, County Durham, are celebrating an internationally recognised award aimed at developing conflict resolution skills.

They join a select band of schools and youth groups across the world to receive a Blue Flag Award from the renowned Peace Advocate Project.

Other groups in Scotland, England, Ireland, and Australia have been similarly recognised, with schools in Mexico, Japan and Spain also working towards recognition.

The project, set up by Rotary in Scotland, was launched in Australia at the Rotary International Convention in 2014. But John Brierley from Consett Rotary and Susan Mellor from Derwentside Rotary helped North Durham Academy to become Peace Advocates.

John said: 'We helped them develop their conflict resolution skills, making a presentation the School Leadership Team and setting up a 'worry box' in student-services where students could report problems to the Peace Advocates.

'The advocates were introduced to all students in the school at a series of year group assemblies, helping them have a visible presence in the school.

'They then discussed with the students who had contacted them through the "worry-box" or by the "SOS - Box" on the school website and helped them resolve their issues.'

The Peace Advocates have undertaken further training sessions on-line with Jean and Keith Best, from Dumfries and Galloway who set up the project. ●



FORTITUDE AND RESILIENCE



NINE Derbyshire youngsters have been publicly celebrated for their resilience and fortitude in addressing personal difficulties in their lives or the lives of others.

The ceremony was organised by Belper and Duffield Rotary with the nine young people receiving etched glass awards from Sergeant Scott Riley of Derbyshire Constabulary.

Sergeant Riley said: "As a Belper lad, I am very proud to present these young people from local schools with awards to recognise their determination in extremely difficult circumstances."

The youngsters from Duffield, Belper, Denby and Alferton schools were each honoured with their stories told to an

invited audience. They included Edward Platts of Ecclesbourne School in Duffield who has Down Syndrome yet is fully involved in school activities and has excelled in English and maths.

Scott Gration of John Flamsteed School in Denby suffered tragic family bereavement alongside severe personal illness which severely restricts involvement in any contact sport or physical activity. Despite the negatives, Scott is positive minded, committed and wants to succeed at being as normal a person as possible.

Diane Smiles, the leader of the Rotary group, said: "I am absolutely amazed and inspired by the courage shown by the nine youngsters being recognised." ●

ROTARY STARS

ROTARY clubs on the Isle of Man have joined forces to promote a Rotary Stars scheme for children in the island's primary schools. There are currently three Rotary clubs on the island; Rushen and Western Mann, Douglas and Ochan.

The scheme was set up to encourage young people to recognise the importance of their community, with teachers selecting children in different age groups for their work in helping others.

This may be fund-raising, helping poorly friends or relatives, or simply standing up for fellow classmates. Each

winner received a certificate, a badge and a book or gift token.

Seven schools participated in the scheme from Castletown, Douglas and Onchan, with the awards presented at assemblies.

Mike Johnson, President of Rushen and Western Mann Rotary, said, "It is important to recognise young people who contribute to their community and family, and we believe Rotary Stars encourages everyone – teachers and parents as well as the children – to appreciate how important such actions can be." ●

WHAT THE DICKENS?!



AN envelope signed by Charles Dickens, a Norman Cornish drawing and a box full of original question cards from the Blockbusters TV game were just some of the items brought to a celebratory antiques event in Darlington

The occasion was part of the centenary celebrations for Darlington Rotary, and comprised an afternoon tea and a talk and valuations by antiques expert TV's David Harper of Antiques Road Trip and Bargain Hunt fame, and David Elstob of Elstob Auctioneers in Ripon.

It attracted around 80 participants who brought along a huge range of items, including pottery, clocks, enamel and jewellery, some worth thousands of pounds. The event, at the Dolphin Centre,

was the latest in a programme of items to mark Rotary's 100th birthday.

Rotary President Michelle Thompson said: "It was a wonderful way to help celebrate our own new status as 'antique' as we reach our 100 year milestone.

"Our thanks go to David Harper and David Elstob who entertained and fascinated us with their information and knowledge about the many amazing and surprising items brought in."

The event was attended by the Mayor of Darlington, Councillor Jan Cossins and it is estimated will raise more than £400 for mainly local Rotary charities.

Included in Rotary's upcoming celebrations is an art competition for children, the siting of a commemorative stone and a centenary concert. ●

BEST KEPT ROTARY

FOR 15 years, Richmond Rotary Club in North Yorkshire has organised a Best Kept Village competition and this year's winner was Moulton, followed by Bellerby and Scorton as runners-up.

Ten villages took part this year and the overall standard was judged to be extremely high. This is the fifth time that Moulton topped the list and was last year's runner up.

Rotary club President, David Stewart, who organised the event praised the efforts of participants.

He said: "We send judges to all the villages during the same two weeks in July and they scored each village on 17 criteria ranging from public spaces and private gardens to the condition of bus shelters, shops, guest houses, inns and the encouragement of wildlife." ●

"THIS IS THE FIFTH TIME THAT MOULTON TOPPED THE LIST AND WAS LAST YEAR'S RUNNER UP."

HISTORIC STREET SIGN RESTORED

SALE Rotary Club joined forces with Sale Civic Society to refurbish and restore the town's historic street signs.

Club President, Michael Riley, and Vice President, Gareth Trehearn, are pictured ascending the ladders to re-fix the refurbished sign which had been situated by the Bulls Head since 1879.

However, the sign was looking very sad with one of the letters missing. So, thanks to the skills of Civic Society member, Eric Shakeshaft, a replica letter was made, the remaining iron letters stripped back, they were then treated,

repainted and mounted on reclaimed timber. The iron letters from the very early street signs in Sale were made by the blacksmith who lived beside the old Bulls Head. ●



ROTARY GARDEN OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

A SEVEN-year project to create a garden of peace and reconciliation has been completed by the Rotary Club of Strathaven in Lanarkshire, Scotland.

The idea to create a garden to provide a place of quiet contemplation and promote the work of The Rotary Foundation was first considered in 2015.

Many factors delayed the project, but work continued in the background to refine and improve the proposals, including the addition of high-quality resin-bound pathways to provide access for all.

Eventually all obstacles were overcome, and the first sod was cut in June and the garden formally opened last September.

A Rotary District Foundation Grant, awarded in 2016, provided seed funding with finance for construction and planting coming from a variety of sources.

A key feature of the project was the involvement of Strathaven Academy whose students helped with landscape and graphic design, which included Rotary Foundation themes and townscape features.

The ceremonial opening of the garden was attended by Narek Bido, District Governor for Scotland South, the civic leader of South Lanarkshire Council, Provost Margaret Cooper, along with Strathaven Academy staff and pupils. ●



ALL SEWED UP!



AN inspirational talk about a project supporting street children in Uganda, has inspired Trent Bridge Rotary Club to make it their international project this Rotary year.

Heather Roberts spoke about the National Police Aid Charity project in Uganda which works with destitute street children in Kampala where, in their teenage years, they are trained to be dressmakers and tailors.

NPAC is a growing organisation supporting an inclusive works programme for underrepresented and excluded disability groups.

Encouraging them to be sufficiently independent to earn a living, trainees need their own basic tailoring kits. The Nottingham-based Rotary club provided sufficient funds to buy six new sewing machines.

Rotarians and their families also sorted through sewing boxes for useful items.

A collection of scissors, un-pickers, pins, needles, tape measures, French chalk and thread has been parcelled up into kitbags containing friendly messages, small enough to be taken in the luggage of visiting charity workers. ●

EVERYONE'S A WINNER!

NOW in its 27th year, 200 pupils took part in the Rotary District Special Needs Football Festival at the Aston Villa Football Club Academy.

Sixteen schools entered 26 teams from an area which centered on Birmingham and the West Midlands, including parts of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire.

This was the 13th year the competition has been hosted by the Rotary Club of Wylde Green with sponsorship provided by Rotary clubs in the district.

Every player was a winner receiving a certificate and medal, with each team taking home a trophy.

Wylde Green Rotarian and Festival

organiser Nick Thurston commented: "This is such a popular event with the schools, so much so that we now have to hold it over two days! It's a really good way to demonstrate Rotary's work in action." ●



GENERATOR AID



BASINGSTOKE Deane Rotary has sent three much-needed generators to Ukraine.

Through their contact with Helping Hands for Ukraine, a division of the charity Chernobyl Children Lifeline which supports children whose lives have been affected by the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, the Hampshire club sent the generators to the war-torn country which is desperately short of electrical power.

War damage to the power infrastructure and now severe weather conditions have reduced the electric supply to 35% of what is required to live a normal life.

It is not just homes that are affected by the lack of power, schools and medical centres are amongst the services which

have been impacted.

One of these generators will supply a small medical centre with enough power to operate efficiently and provide a much-needed service to the community.

The generator can also help heat a school and supply enough light for students to complete their education.

A small generator is of great value for communication in small communities in country areas where there is no electricity, as they can be used to recharge mobile phones and power laptops enabling contact with the outside world.

The cost of shipment direct from the UK was prohibitive, so the generators had to be purchased in Poland and delivered across the border into Ukraine. ●

"WAR DAMAGE TO THE POWER INFRASTRUCTURE AND NOW SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS HAVE REDUCED THE ELECTRIC SUPPLY TO 35%."

FANCY YOURSELF AS A POET?

THE Rotary Poet of the Year competition was launched in December which will culminate with awards being presented at May's Rotary International convention in Singapore.

The event is being supported by Rotary International President, Gordon McNally, and his wife Heather. It is being organised over the next five years by Past Rotary Great Britain & Ireland President, Nan McCreddie, and Adrian Brewer with the E-club of Innovation in District 1080, which is Rotary in East Anglia.

The poetry competition has been split into separate categories with poems submitted in English, French, Spanish and Italian.

Winners will be selected by a panel of judges and prizes awarded either in person or online at the Singapore convention. The winning entries will be read aloud at the awards ceremony.

The competition will raise funds for Rotary-supported charities, including The Rotary Foundation.

Nan McCreddie said: "Rotary is a diverse and eclectic organisation with 1.4 million members in 190 countries from all walks of life. I hope they will all join this exciting programme and I look forward to reading the entries as they come in." ●

FIND OUT MORE ➔

rotarypoetry.org
adrianbrewer@btinternet.com
nan.mccreadie@btinternet.com

THE REPAIR CAFÉ

BAKEWELL Rotary Club in Derbyshire continues to promote its environmental credentials.

The club which staged its second Repair Café at the Bakewell Methodist Church, saw a range of repairs completed to goods which would have otherwise been scrapped.

The club is co-ordinating these events to reuse, repair and recycle items instead of adding to the millions of tonnes of

landfill every year.

At a recent Repair Café, volunteers repaired wooden items, lamps, and even a garden brush to save them from being thrown away.

The club have more events planned for 2024 with visitors able to come along for a cuppa, while bringing along a sewing repair, a portable electrical item or just something which needs to be glued or screwed while they wait. ●



TECHNOLOGY TREAT

CHANNEL Rotary Club in Folkestone has provided £4,000 worth of funding towards the Fifth Trust, a Kent-based charity that supports adults with learning disabilities from the age of 16.

They provide a day care service for around 160 students at two skills centres in the beautiful Elham Valley near Canterbury, offering a huge range of activities and opportunities.

Through creative, educational and practical sessions, and rewarding work in the Vineyard Garden Centre and Vineyard Café and out in the local community, the students develop essential life skills and the confidence to make their own choices, both large and small.

The Barham Skills Centre now includes a sensory room which provides a safe, therapeutic space for students to calm and focus themselves.

Channel Rotary has been proud to provide the £4,000 needed to add a dynamic moving floor to the facility.

This amazing state-of-the-art projector puts images onto the floor which the students can interact with, for example chasing the fish in a pond, who then swim away.

"As well as being beneficial for people on the autism spectrum, multi-sensory spaces have also been seen to help individuals with ADHD, cerebral palsy and Down syndrome, as well as a variety of developmental challenges." ●



ROTARY SPONSORS NEW COMMUNITY BUS



"INSIDE, THE CONVERTED BUS OFFERS A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES SPECIFICALLY TAILORED TO THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF LOCAL YOUTH."

IT is not often that a brightly-painted double decker bus parks outside Conyngham Hall in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire. But that is what happened when it called in as part of the SPACE Community Bus programme (Social Place for Activities, Chilling & Education)

Knaresborough Revolution, affiliated to Knaresborough Rotary Club, launched their exciting new project providing a safe and engaging space to empower young people in the town to socialise, learn, and find support.

The innovative, custom-designed community bus is a vibrant and mobile hub. Inside, the converted bus offers a variety of activities and programmes specifically tailored to the needs and interests of local youth.

Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, the bus includes study areas, gaming consoles, a music system, arts and

crafts materials, and access to additional resources for educational and personal development.

The launch of the community bus has been made possible through the financial support of Knaresborough Rotary Club, local sponsors and other community partners, including Knaresborough Connectors, a community benefit society.

James Pickard, Chair of Knaresborough Revolution, said: "We are thrilled to launch the Community Bus, as it represents a significant step forward in our commitment to empowering Knaresborough's youth and other members of the community.

"By bringing our services directly to their neighbourhoods, we are breaking down geographical and social barriers, ensuring every young person has access to opportunities for growth, personal development, and positive engagement." ●

KING'S AWARD FOR ST HELENS ROTARY

ROTARY St Helens has received The King's Award for Voluntary Service which is the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE.

The Lancashire club has been running for 100 years and has been recognised for its innovative approaches to addressing community challenges.

During Covid vaccination rollout, stewards were repeatedly asked by the public for advice on how to obtain access to foodbanks and mental health support.

Rotary offered a solution with a community poster listing the top six support areas identified within St Helens Borough.

Under each area was a QR Code which, once scanned, would take the user to a link to local charities and organisations which were providing support for that specific need.

In addition, Rotary recognised issues in both men's and women's health, delivering in partnership with local primary schools cards for Mother's and Father's Day. The children illustrated the cards, including their own personal message. Printed inside was a QR Code taking the user to the specific websites which offered support.

Rotary St Helens supported the elderly by linking primary schools to local care homes, with children creating Christmas cards addressed to residents. For many this was the only Christmas card they would receive.

Rotarians also supported three of the primary schools with their reading.

Rotary has recently delivered a Heritage Trail highlighting the industrial history of St Helens, increasing community aspirations and complementing the planned

development of the town centre. This has also the added advantage of supporting team-building canoeing sessions on the Sankey Canal, the first for many decades.

These were some of the projects which were deemed worthy of The King's Award for Voluntary Service and are in addition to the many significant activities the club has delivered for a century.

Rotary St Helens is one of 262 local charities, social enterprises, and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award this year.

The King's Award for Voluntary Service was created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee.

Six representatives of Rotary St Helens will receive a crystal award and certificate from the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside in the near future. In addition, two Rotarians will attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace next summer, along with other recipients.

Past President, Paul Winstanley said: "It is such an honour for Rotary St Helens in our centenary year to receive this prestigious award, especially as it's the first year of The King's Award for Voluntary Service being awarded.

"I am delighted that we have been recognised for the hard work and commitment of our members in supporting the local community.

"Rotary St Helens decided to deliver unique and novel projects to address some of the challenges within our community, which are now being adopted by other Rotary clubs.

"I believe this award will also raise awareness across the UK by highlighting Rotary's service to communities, encouraging others to aid its good work." ●

"ROTARY ST HELENS DECIDED TO DELIVER UNIQUE AND NOVEL PROJECTS TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE CHALLENGES WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY, WHICH ARE NOW BEING ADOPTED BY OTHER ROTARY CLUBS."

FOCUS ON YOUTH

HERTFORDSHIRE-based Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary Club hosted a youth showcase in the town square to highlight the amazing work of youth groups operating in the town.

Previous plans to organise the event were hit by Covid, but this time 25 youth organisations took part featuring theatre groups, dance clubs, schools, scouts and guides along with sports clubs. It was organised jointly with North Herts Council.

Many of the groups hosted presentations during the day which also featured a brass band, poetry readings and a circus skills group. The scouts also brought a climbing wall.

Organiser, Alan Doggett, said: "The feedback has been amazing, and we are now planning for next year. The total cost of the event was £600."

Andy Calvert, the Immediate Past District Governor for District 1260, and current youth lead, brought the District gazebo to fly the Rotary flag.

He said: "This has shown how other youth organisations can work alongside Rotary supporting young people. We should be looking to move our competitions and projects from historically being school-based to a wider audience and encouraging partnership working in our community." ●



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ACTING OUR AGE IN ROTARY...

As a young working Rotarian (58 going on 79 (maybe 34), I have been told my whole Rotary life to introduce others to the association. In our Rotary we have allowed average age to rise, like my cholesterol.

Don't get me wrong...age (too much of it, or the lack of it) doesn't make us good or bad Rotarians, but the challenge for so many of us is we can't do today what we did 20 years ago when we joined.

One certainty in life, and it's not birth, death, and taxes (thank you Mark Twain), is that time gently, continually move onwards... (What goes up but never comes down? My age and waistline).

We're all getting older and shorter and wider! And your skin will lose its fight with gravity. You don't have to like it, but at least laugh about it... before you put your back out.

We all have something to bring, sharing of ourselves, our networks, professional and personal abilities. But this changes at different life stages, and we need to reflect that in our Rotary activities, service and good times that we have enjoyed, before we forget what those are.

In December, some senior members in my club worry they can no longer 'do' Santa for miles and hours in the dark and ice. For me the fridge is a challenge some days! Some get others to support their sleigh or 'do a night' and this spreads Rotary joy.

We should never be afraid to be the best we can be: professionally, personally, at any life

stage. Now I'm older, everything's finally starting to click... knees, back, neck.

Our association is ageing, declining and doing some fabulous work, often based on our predecessors' legacy.

We bring in new like-minded members, maybe it's time to introduce others with their own different views.

A diversity of view even. Perhaps this could permeate as change, if we can just remember what we're talking about.

**"WE SHOULD NEVER BE
AFRAID TO BE THE BEST WE
CAN BE: PROFESSIONALLY,
PERSONALLY, AT ANY
LIFE STAGE."**

New members bring all sorts of NEW - ideas, thoughts, opportunities for service and sociality. I hear the words of my father: 'is there no tune with that music'; 'you're not going out dressed like that'... wisdom and feedback...

We have flourished as Rotarians, some of us are slower and greyer and we still have plenty to give - including letting (and supporting) others flourish before we 'finish'. Just because it didn't work then doesn't mean it won't work now (if we can recall then, obviously).

What we inherited, what we leave, is ours to choose but let's understand we can all bring lots to Rotary, whatever our maturity - which is different from age of course! But we're not getting old; we're becoming a classic vintage.

Like a fine wine, I get more complex with age. And vinegar.

P.S. Old age is a heck of a lot better than the alternative! ●

● Dr Geoff Mackey is a member of the Audley Rotary Club (D1210 which is Rotary in Shropshire, Staffordshire and the North West Midlands), currently President in its 60th year.



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White



White

"Carrie" Womens

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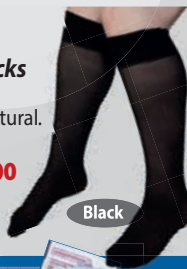
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