



AND NOW FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT ...

What better way to start a new year than with something new ... which is why we're launching a periodic news 'Update' for honorary members, supporters and friends of the club. Regular members will see it too but they will probably already know what's coming – whereas others don't have to sit through a year of 'Council' and club 'Business' meetings..!

The 'Update' is being introduced to provide information about what we're doing. Things you might not be aware of or maybe missed in the local press. More than anything, though, we want you to be better informed and involved in the club that you are part of or that you support.

For much the same reason we recently voted to welcome all honorary members to one meeting a year where we would pay the cost of their two-course dinner. And, if transport is a problem, then we can arrange for a member to pick you up from home and take you back afterwards. That's because we would like to see more of you and for you to feel more included in what we're doing.

To get the ball rolling here's a flavour of what's been going on through 2023. We hope it's of interest. But, either way, we'd like to hear from you. About what you think of the 'Update' ... suggestions for content, presentation and, of course, what you would like to see in the coming issues.

You can drop me a line at grahamking.gk@gmail.com

Those future issues may be about something we're doing, discussing or an occasion that we hope you'll be able to attend. We do hope to see more of you and, for our part, we'll try to create events to which we can welcome you more often.

We hope to see you there.

THE CHARTER YEAR



This month we end the 85th anniversary year of Rotary in Whitchurch since the founding members first met in January 1938. Through eight decades there has been a stream of dedicated members, officers and presidents who have served the town, championed its causes and supported people and groups who have desperately needed help ... as well as responding to international disaster relief.

A few months ago two of the town's best known faces paid tribute to the club. "It would be difficult to imagine life without the contribution that Rotary continues to make," said the Mayor, Councillor Andy Hall. And 'Town Pirate' Guy Hepworth added "they will always get a High Street 'shout out' from me."

'The Pirate' is pictured with Club president Graham King (left) and the Mayor who both donned their 85th anniversary T-shirts.



Then, after weeks of preparation, the club's Charter display was installed for a two-month run at the Civic Centre ... containing all the major historic assets from the past 85 years. The original president's chain and attendance book dating back to 1938, a silver plate from San Telmo Rotarians in Buenos Aires, Len Bowen's PHF medal, Tom Kelly's MBE, the 'stirring spoon', the Davy Lamp. Photographs ... stories ... and more

Three days later, however, the RAAC concrete problem was detected at the Civic Centre and the whole placed closed indefinitely.

The shortest Rotary display on record...?

THAT WAS THE YEAR, THAT WAS!

THE SOCIAL YEAR

The past year has been another usual hive of activity – but it's not all work. We try not to forget that Rotary is about friendship, too, and the social life is important. That's another reason for introducing this 'Update' – as a way of giving you advance information about the various social events at which honorary members, family, friends and supporters are always welcome to join us.

The first one will be our annual Burns Night on Tuesday 30th January at the Hill Valley Hotel at 6.30pm for a 7pm start. Mike Nimmo is currently chasing the haggis, as we speak, to accompany the traditional tatties and neeps. If you can be there please drop a line - before 24 January - to David Pritchard Jones on davidpritchardjones@gmail.com



The Burns Supper will kick-off another series of purely social 'Fifth Tuesday' events which are held away from our routine Hill Valley venue. In the past year these have included a 'Race Night', with fish and chip supper, at Sir John Talbot School ... a visit to Grocott's Museum at Prees ... and a Curry Night at the Bluewater Indian restaurant in Whitchurch.

Maggie Allen, who organises the 'Fifth Tuesdays' also arranged a successful lunchtime gathering at the White Lion in Ash – mainly for members who find evening meetings difficult to attend. Similar future lunches like this may also be ideal for honorary members, friends and supporters to attend too ... so we'll keep you posted.

The same goes for educational visits like the one John Holland organised to the Derbyshire production centre for Aquabox (*pictured, left*) which since its formation in 1992 has distributed equipment that converts contaminated water to safe drinking water in areas affected by natural or man-made disasters.

And, of course, there was the club's well-attended Charter Dinner in October which prompted many complimentary comments. Incidentally, exactly 85 people attended the 85th dinner ... spooky, eh?

THE COMMUNITY YEAR

Now that the annual Santa tour is complete our first community project will be to donate food from our 'Reverse Advent Calendar' to the Whitchurch Food Bank. Instead of **taking** from a commercial advent calendar, each day, our members **donate** given items of high-demand food from a suggested list. Last year we handed over 14 hampers and the result is looking good again. Also, in July, as schools were facing the summer break, we made a £1,000 donation to the Food Bank which went towards the cost of feeding 64 children in 22 local families for three weeks during the school holiday period.



Our first healthcare project of 2024 is likely to be the regular Prostate Cancer testing – which, last time, took around 600 samples for testing during a three hour evening session at the Rugby Club.

That will be followed up, later in the year, by our 'Health Awareness' initiative which conducts public blood pressure tests to detect hypertension and hyperglycaemia - major causes of premature deaths from strokes and heart attacks that affect more than 12 million people in England alone. Last year we tested 108 people and there were 17 abnormal results of which seven were classed as 'very serious' and warranted referral for potentially life-saving medical advice. The Health Awareness team is pictured (*right*) with organiser Keith Senior on the left.

One of the newest youth projects to get financial support from us was the Fort Boxing Club which desperately needed cash to equip a move to new premises in Whitchurch. The wonderful work they do to provide a focal point for young people in the area was recognised when the Mayor, High Sheriff and Lord Lieutenant turned up at the official opening to join a community gathering, including, Rotary and Inner Wheel members.

We had our usual presence at the Whitchurch Canal Festival in September and the Blackberry Fair in October. And the autumn canal boat trips were well received, again - although the format will be changing next year when the trips are held, earlier, in July.

THE FUNDRAISING YEAR



We had three major fundraising successes in 2023. One was the series of six car boot sales at Alderford Lake which raised £3,650 for the club's charity account and made good use of the club's new branded gazebo (*pictured with Brian Acty and Steve Chisholm*). Another was a return concert at St Alkmund's Church by the acapella singing group 'Cor Bach', with saxophonist Oliver Pritchard Jones (*pictured right*) - which raised £4,000 for Whitchurch Rotary and Inner Wheel club charities. And, of course, our more recent Christmas Float tour with Santa raised another £9,757 - nearly £280 more than the year before.

THE MEMBERSHIP YEAR

We have been saddened by losses - notably Richard Persson, a former club president and Paul Harris Fellow who died at the turn of the year. And the Rev. Judy Hunt resigned her membership after retiring as rector of St Alkmund's Church.

But there were celebrations too.

Paul Harris Fellowships were presented to John Holland, as he heads towards his 40th year as a Rotarian, and Walter Schafer's PHF was upgraded to a sapphire award. Long service awards went to David Williams and Don Pearce to mark their 40 years in Rotary. Ken Taylor, the club's oldest member, was presented with his 55 year certificate at a party for his 99th birthday. And Bill Grosset recently received a 54-year certificate.

Roly Wyatt, who retired from Rotary in the summer, was honoured, with his wife Kath, for their contribution to the club since he joined in 1955 - an amazing total of 68 years which places him as the longest serving Rotary club member in the town's history and among the longest serving in the world. Roly is a former president, a Paul Harris Fellow (for his District work) and was instrumental in setting up the town's Lifeline project. A genuine legend.



Ken Taylor with Tom Kelly and Maggie Allen



Roly and Kath Wyatt with Graham King