



JON IS THE FOURTH NEW MEMBER IN AS MANY WEEKS

Membership is going great guns, so far, in 2024 – with four new members in as many weeks. The latest is Jon Cross - a former firefighter and risk manager in cargo and logistics. He spent his early years in Nigeria and Botswana, where he was born, before his parents moved back to the UK. During his career with the Fire and Rescue Service, he held posts including Station Commander, Divisional Officer and Staff Officer to the Chief Fire Officer, and was latterly seconded to the Home Office Fire Service College in Gloucestershire as a Course Director. After the first Gulf War he joined the specialist international firefighting operation in Kuwait.

And we also, in the process, gain a keen crown green bowler as well as a golfer and angler.

MIKE ARNOLD ... PAUL HARRIS FELLOW

It is always one of the greatest pleasures and privileges in Rotary to award a Paul Harris Fellowship. It's among the organisation's highest accolades.

And it makes the pleasure even greater to hand it to someone who has never expected or sought it. Someone who largely avoids the Rotary limelight. But someone who still represents the loyal commitment and service that we see so often from time-served Rotarians who give their skills, support and fellowship for, in this case, 34 years as a Whitchurch Rotarian.

In that time Mike Arnold has lead our club Quiz Team to a string of trophy victories in District championships. After early work with a travelling circus and military service, Mike settled into journalism – latterly as Editor of the Whitchurch Herald.

And importantly, with his wife Sue, many a Christmas collector, for several years, has enjoyed their mince pie and mulled wine hospitality at the end of a cold December Santa float tour. And that, alone, is well worth a badge and a certificate.



MAGGIE RAISES £250,000 FOR CHARITIES

Our charity coffers were recently swelled – and not for the first time – with the £500 raised by one of the regular charity bingo nights at Prees Cricket and Recreation Club. But even that was a drop in the ocean for the lady behind those charity nights.

Maggie Allen has been organising the club's fundraising bingo sessions for little more than a decade. Yet, in that short time, she has raised an estimated £250,000 ... an outstanding achievement. So much so that she was recently, in recognition, presented with the Simon Lines Trophy and shield.

Maggie is also a Rotarian and, next year, will be stepping up for a second term as president of Whitchurch Rotary. She's also a regular organiser of our social events – the latest of which will be a skittles night at the Bickerton Poacher on Tuesday 30 April.

Hopefully we'll see you there.

PSA TESTING – ONE OF THE TOWN'S MOST VALUED LIFE-SAVERS

Whitchurch Rotary's prostate testing events have become one of the town's most valued life-saving projects of the last decade. The previous one attracted a record-breaking 600 men who gathered at Whitchurch Rugby Club and made it one of Rotary's largest community health events in Shropshire. Since they were introduced the tests have recommended hundreds of men to seek further medical advice which, it is estimated, has saved dozens of lives. The latest screening session – at the Rugby Club again, from 6pm on Monday 18 March – will be a three hour testing session with a team of professional phlebotomists joining forces with volunteer support from Rotarians, Inner Wheel members, and friends.



MONEY ... "KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY STACK"

One of our new members has a special reason to cheer the musical success of British rock band Pink Floyd. For the richer they get the more chance he might have to recover the £5 he once loaned guitarist Dave Gilmour to pay a taxi fare.

Alan Willis knew the band well, several decades back, when he rented space to them, in London, for band rehearsals. Since then he has built his own following as a musician playing in Shrewsbury pubs, Liverpool and Lancashire folk clubs, community events and fund raisers. (Somewhat mysteriously, he still holds a busker's licence for Yeovil.)

Alan never did get that taxi fare back but, given that Gilmour is now reputed to be worth around £160 million, he does live in hope.

NEARLY £5,000 IN NEW DONATIONS

An appeal, a couple of months ago - for you to tell us about causes and charities that you would like us to support - did bear fruit. We received some useful nominations and they have now received some useful donations. So ... following our 'reverse advent calendar' project in December - where Rotarians supported the town's Foodbank by putting priority food items to one side on each of the 25 days leading up to Christmas, we gave a cash total of £4,760 in donations. These went to the Foodbank itself, as an additional contribution, to Shropshire Carers, the local 'Little Bears' childcare group to cover the rapidly escalating cost of milk powder, the Brownlow Centre for replacement furniture, and the Fort Boxing Club to buy boxing pads and gloves for their growing membership of more than 60 youngsters.

And there will be others who are yet to receive other donations that are still in the pipeline.



THE CAR BOOT SALES ARE BACK WITH ANOTHER SIX MORE FOR '24 AND THIS TIME THEY'RE EVEN BETTER ... SO PITCH UP AND SELL PARK UP AND BROWSE

- AT -
ALDERFORD LAKE, Tilstock Rd, Whitchurch SY13 3JQ
ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH (except July)
APRIL MAY JUNE
AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER
IN AID OF ROTARY CHARITIES AND CAUSES

Sellers: set up on site from 8am - 9am	Buyers: gates open at 9am
Charges: cars £10	Charge: £1 per person
trailers an additional £5	
vans £15	

SIX MORE FOR '24

A community fundraising experiment, tested two years ago, has turned into one of Whitchurch Rotary's biggest success stories. Back in the autumn of 2022 we were generously offered a field, close to the popular lake at Alderford on Tilstock Road, to organise a series of three trial car boot sales. The results were promising so, last year, the project was extended to six events from April to October - taking a break only when the field was in use for the massive Alderfest weekend of live music.

By the end of the year, the sales were attracting a loyal following of sellers and buyers alike. And they were generating valuable income to finance our support for community charities and causes, health projects like the prostate and blood pressure screening tests, and the hot meals at Christmas Day lunchtime.

NOW ... the 2024 car boot sales are about to begin again on the first Sunday of each month - apart from July. The first is at Alderford on **7 April**, opening to buyers at 9am. Sellers are able to set up on site from 8am with charges ranging from £10 to £15.

ECO MONTH WAS "BRILLIANT"

Our first Eco Month seems to have hit several targets. Especially for the daily 'eco tips' that went out from the 1st through to the 29th of February - which drew attention to some useful household tips that made financial as well as environmental sense. The project attracted praise from District officers who joined our mailing list, for several days, to observe and follow the project. The incoming District Governor is planning to cite it as a model for other Rotary clubs to follow. And the Assistant Governor for our zone called it "brilliant".

The 'Eco Month' was obviously a way of promoting Rotary's environmental position - but the benefits go beyond that. For a variety of reasons, people are relating to ecological issues far more than they were a decade or more ago. So, being seen to embrace aspects that our community considers increasingly important could help modernise the Rotary image. And, if people relate to us more, it may help us to be seen as a group worth joining - not simply respecting from a distance.

If you never saw our 'Eco Tips' drop me a line to grahamking.gk@gmail.com and I'll send them to you.

