

Presidents report 2019-2020

At the time of writing, this Rotary year feels incomplete as a result of the outbreak of Covid-19.

I feel that it has been a successful and enjoyable year for Members, although we were saddened by the death of Marjorie Lyle, a long serving member, and her husband Lawrence and more recently by the death of Gerald Colson.

At the start of the new Rotary year, having received feedback from many Members, I sought to increase the diversity of events to freshen up the normal Club meetings and to encourage new members to join. These events included:

- An Art & Craft Day with the assistance of Inner Wheel.
- A Club meeting in Barham Village Hall after a trip to Barham Vineyard.
- A local amateur singing group (Lemon Zingers) at the start of a Rotary meeting.
- A 1.5 hour talk by a local historian (John Buss) on Lawrence of Arabia
- An evening playing Bat and Trap in the garden of a Canterbury pub

These 'President's Events' required the help of Past President David Barton and his team to organise, and the Club is appreciative of their efforts.

The Rotary year started well with another successful Duck Race in Canterbury. This is great publicity for the Club, as well as a major fundraising activity, and it was great to see many Members involved with the planning of the event as well as being present on the day.

It was great to see all the great work that Members do behind the scenes, too numerous to mention. This included the Innovation Competition organised by Brian Dobinson and his team; there were also over 100 mock interviews held at the Abbey School in Faversham and Spires Academy, with 12 Members taking part at each school. We were also delighted that a team from Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Canterbury that we were helping to sponsor in the F1 in Schools Competition became World Champions!

Throughout the year I've tried to ensure that the incoming President is fully aware of all activities I have been involved with in my year, and we have also produced a President's handbook for future years. In addition, there is now a full explanation of our monthly accounts available for all Members.

The outbreak of Covid-19 throughout the world required action to safeguard the membership. From seeing the spread of the virus initially in Italy and then throughout the rest of Europe, it became clear that we needed to end the normal Rotary meetings. Working with Club Council, the Club meetings were ended as from 13 March 2020. I believe that we were the first Club to close in District 1120. UK lockdown measures were then brought in as from 23 March 2020.

The lockdown also necessitated the cancellation of the annual Pentangular event which had been planned to be held in Leuven in May 2020. This is a great shame, as many Members like attending the Pentangular events.

With the Covid-19 lockdown measures being implemented, and the associated hardship this caused to the local population, many Members of the Club donated to Canterbury Foodbank and also the Club voted for the release of various funds to support the Prince of Wales Youth Club in their efforts to feed healthy packed lunches to disadvantaged local children.

The Club has adapted to this new environment, with the normal Tuesday meetings replaced by meetings by an IT solution (Zoom) on smart phones and computers. The Club is grateful

to Past President Richard Kemball-Cook for arranging these meetings; Members are rapidly getting up to speed with the new technology. We await to see when normal meetings can be resumed, but it is anticipated that this will not be for many months to come.

Looking back on the year, I hope that when the lockdown measures are relaxed, the great work done by Members can be picked up again. In particular, the continuation of the fundraising by Bob Anderson and Deborah Connolly for the Honey Bears Nursery.

The Club is grateful to Past President Peter Hermitage for leading a brainstorming discussion on the future of the Club. We will need to look into this further, when normal meetings are resumed, in order to encourage more members and continue to make meetings more diverse.

The fundraising and the variety of events that are arranged by Club Members has again been excellent and these are summarised in the following Club Committee reports.

It has been a pleasure to serve as President for 2019/2020 and I wish my successor, Alan Mepstead all the best for his Presidential year.

Neil Fraser

July 2020