

My Rotary Presidential Year 2005/6. (Jake Davies)

1. Introduction

It is surprisingly difficult to summarise in two pages the events and contributions made by the Members in the course of a Rotary year. I have therefore concentrated on those matters which were introduced or happened differently either as a result of a plan or by force of circumstances. This may result in a lack of emphasis on all the hard work performed by members such as the Secretary (John Hill) and the Treasurer (Richard Akister). My thanks are due to all such members of the Council in particular and all members.

2. Speakers at Ladies Evenings

A special effort was made to engage interesting speakers for the Ladies Evenings. Notable speakers were the Bishop of Dover (The Reverend Stephen Venner), John Julius Norwich (Lord Norwich) and His Honour Judge Derek Clarkson. The Christmas Message was entrusted to Stephen Venner and he was supported by the Snowdown Male Voice choir with a program of Christmas and Welsh music. Derek Clarkson entertained us with a store of reminiscences from his time as a judge in the Middlesex Criminal Court. To celebrate my studies at Gray's Inn an attempt was made to introduce for the evening some of the customs of the Inn. Lord Norwich talked about his book "Christmas Crackers".

3. Fund Raising

The generally favourable financial climate enabled substantial funds to be raised during the year. The major exercises included an Auction of Talents held at Kings School. This contributed £8200 with additional Gift Aid repayments. The Duck Race was held on the 3rd September and raised over £7,000. The balance came from Supermarket and High Street collections.

4. President's Weekend

More credit was probably due to Philippa than to me for the organisation of this weekend. It followed the practice of other clubs and was fully enjoyed by those who took part. The cost was fixed at £125 a head including a coach and a free bar in the hotel until 10 o'clock. We visited Bath, Bristol and Cheddar Gorge and stayed at Weston-super-Mare. Attractions visited included the Pump Room at Bath and the Great Britain at Bristol.

5. Timing and Location of Meetings

There were a number of influences on where and when meetings were held. When Rotary first moved to the Kent County Cricket Club a replacement marquee was provided. The arrival of outside caterers had encouraged an attitude that if it was not convenient to the Club it was up to us to find an alternative. There was no shortage of venues suggested and these included Canterbury Golf Club, the Kent & Canterbury Club, the Abbots Barton Hotel, Canterbury Bowls Club. In addition a move was taking place to replace the aperitif meeting on the second Tuesday of the month by a supper meeting including a speaker. District also wished us to sponsor a new breakfast club based at the University of Kent. This we rejected on the grounds that their statistics were extremely dubious, the University seemed a poor location and that there was already a breakfast club at Chestfield.

6. Membership

This was a cause for concern as three Rotarians died during the year Jack Phillipson, Pip Arnold and Brian Reid. Each had made a significant contribution during their period of membership. The Reverend David Roper resigned after a short period of membership. This was a classic example of failing to ensure that new members are adequately fulfilled according to their interests. Even worse, it was not clear who was to blame, probably the President, possibly his sponsor and definitely everybody else. The only new member inducted was the Reverend John Richardson from Wye. I continued the policy of liberally granting leave of absence in the hope that members would eventually return to the fold or on the grounds that they made other valuable contributions to the Club.

7. Technology

An influx had been expected of speakers using Powerpoint for their presentations. On occasions this had created difficulties through incompatibility between the projector and the computer. To overcome this difficulty a matching computer and projector were donated. The technical skills were provided by Robin Hendy and the Club paid for a spare bulb.

8. Pentangular and St Quentin.

It was our turn to visit St Quentin and Ludenscheid. Both events were well supported. I made a memorable attempt to give a farewell speech in schoolboy French at the end of our visit. In hindsight this might have been better had a little more time been spent on its preparation or assistance sought from the more skilled linguists now members of the Club. I did not attempt a similar feat in German. The Minigroup Study exchange was held in Utrecht and our candidates were selected by Alastair Scott.

9. Paul Harris Fellowships

By tradition within the Club these are not given lightly although we have substantial credits from our regular contributions to Rotary Foundation. I followed the existing custom within the Club of awarding a Fellowship to Past President Richard Akister. This was in recognition in particular of his long-standing service as treasurer of the Club, and he also volunteered at short notice to fill a vacancy during my year of office. Alastair Scott was awarded an embellishment to his existing Paul Harris Fellowship by Ludenscheid in recognition of his services to the links between the two clubs.

The system has since been changed to be on the recommendation of the existing Paul Harris Fellows which makes sure that long term servants of the Club stand a better chance of being recognised.

10. Presidential Succession.

It would probably be a good idea to have a Committee of Immediate Past Presidents to be responsible for suggesting possible successors. I was fortunate in that Philip Abbott had previously indicated an enthusiasm for being the President in the following year in which the home Pentangular was to be held. It was not surprising that he invited a linguist, Alan Forrest, to follow him. There is a sort of folklore about who has been invited to be President and their response and whether or not this was intended to be irrevocable. There seems to be much scope and need for a better system. *(Compiled 11th January 2011)*

