

ROTARY YEAR 1997-1998

It was a great pleasure to induct three new members to the Club. Two are now senior officers of Christ Church University, Professor Michael Wright, the first Vice-Chancellor, and Peter Hermitage, QPM, Pro-Chancellor. The third is Tony Loughran, who brought valuable building society expertise to the Club.

There were several notable events during the year. Together with our first contact Club overseas, St Quentin, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first meeting in St Quentin in 1947. It was initiated by Stephen Thompson's grandfather John B. Thompson. It was said that, with postwar shortages still present, when the St Quentin Club was asked what the Canterbury members should bring over, they said, very surprisingly, cornflakes. So to mark the occasion fifty years later, I presented the St Quentin Club with a huge case of cornflakes at the end of the dinner in the evening, with an appropriate speech in my best French.

The Pentangular early in June 1998 was in Utrecht. The ladies of Utrecht were very much in evidence, all twelve of them. Their contribution to the entertainment was to perform the cancan. I got a severe Thatcher style "handbagging" from the Utrecht ladies who demanded to know when Canterbury was going to have lady members. I told them "when the Archbishop of Canterbury is a woman". I protested at being treated so roughly, remarking that they did not treat the President of Ludenscheid in the same way, to which they replied, "Well, the Ludenscheid Club are Germans". In other words, Canterbury was seen as a soft touch. I made a fool of myself by attempting to give my speech in Dutch. The Utrecht members thought it hilarious and cheered every sentence. The French Vice-President broke with Gaullist tradition by giving his speech in flawless English. He was lucky not to be guillotined on his return home.

My reception in Utrecht brings me to another notable event. It fell to my lot to hold what had been a triennial vote of the Canterbury Club members on whether or not to admit ladies into membership. It was the last time such a vote was held, and the motion was defeated 60:40. It was interesting that the majority against was larger than three years before.

The major fund-raising event was a Fun-day on the new Thanet Way. Unfortunately completion was much delayed, and there were many postponements. It had been intended to hold the Fun-day in September 1997, but eventually we were able to hold it early in the spring 1998, when the weather was not at its best. We were allowed to use a stretch of the London-bound carriage way west of the Herne Bay exit. We were given very little warning of when we could have the road, so advance publicity was a problem. Club members and the ladies of the Inner Wheel rallied round, and Stephen Thompson in particular put much hard labour into transporting barriers.

I had much pleasure in welcoming His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey and his wife Eileen, as well as the Very Reverend, the Dean of Canterbury John Simpson and his wife Ruth. There were several guests from the St Quentin and Ludenscheid Clubs and a number of Rotary Scholars. George Carey was in great form, and all our guests were impressed by his friendliness when talking to them about where they had come from.

The year passed without any disasters, under the watchful eye of PP Tom Barker, a great upholder of Rotary standards and traditions, and who reported to me every month about how the year was progressing. I was greatly indebted to Robin Quarrell as Secretary, Richard Akister as Treasurer and Chris Laming as Master of Ceremonies for all their help and guidance during my year of office, and indeed to all members of the Club for their support.

Compiled in February 2010