

## 1996-1997 Club 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**MIKE TALBOT President**

At the Handover Meeting in July 1996, retiring President Ray Sandy signed off with the words 'today's peacock is tomorrow's feather duster' and I have smiled at the memory of those words whenever a new President is inducted. I gave a commitment that I would say a different grace at all our 'eating' meetings and this added a fun dimension to our gatherings and I know was enjoyed by members.

Our first fund raising event was A Mile of Coins collection in Canterbury City Centre aided by our own Mr Blobby alias Sidney Denham; this was quickly followed by our annual Cricket Tent Party. In September we organised as part of our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, (when I say 'we' I really mean Stephen Thompson, his team and his family!) a sponsored walk/ride/run centred on my home village of Bishopsbourne, on behalf of all local charities. This Miles Make Money event attracted some 200 entrants and over £7,000-00 was raised, of which 20% was given to Rotary's own good causes.

In October it was my honour to induct The Dean of Canterbury Cathedral, The Very Rev. John Simpson M.A., D.D. as an Honorary Member of our Club. We hosted our St. Quentin Rotary friends for a weekend visit, which PP David Thompson organised with his usual flair. Later in the month a good party of members and partners, including our IPP Ray Sandy, attended the 67<sup>th</sup> Annual District Conference at Eastbourne. It is hard to believe that within a month of enjoying the fun & fellowship of Conference, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November, Ray suffered a heart attack at his home and died. Earlier in November we were selected as the Club to host a 1120 District open meeting for the RIBI National President and his wife, Keith and Judy Barnard-Jones; it was a memorable visit.

It was a great pleasure to entertain our Honorary Member, The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey and his wife Eileen together with our newest 'recruit' The Dean, John Simpson, to our Christmas Party in December. In January along with other local Presidents and the IDG Alan Hooton, I attended a dinner in Deal to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the death of Paul Harris.

The month of February was very important to all of us as we celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the charter of our Club, No. 70 in R.I.B.I. and No. 1237 in R.I., by holding a Banquet at The King's School. The organising committee members were PP David Thompson - who also masterminded the production of our club history to date, entitled 'The first 75 years' - Stephen Thompson and myself. It was a bolt out of the blue when, late afternoon on Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1997, as I was helping to prepare the venue for our banquet, I received a telephone call from PP Alistair Scott to tell me that David had suffered a heart attack and died.

The following evening it was a stunned gathering which learned of his passing. The tributes were from the heart, no one had other than words of praise, thanks and admiration for this exceptional man; it had been a privilege for us all to serve with him as members of the Rotary Club of Canterbury.

**'Service Above Self'** so aptly described David's life. He would have been delighted to know that proceeds from the event enabled us to give £1000.00 to each of Pilgrims Hospice and Fifth Trust – a charity which supports adults with learning difficulties.

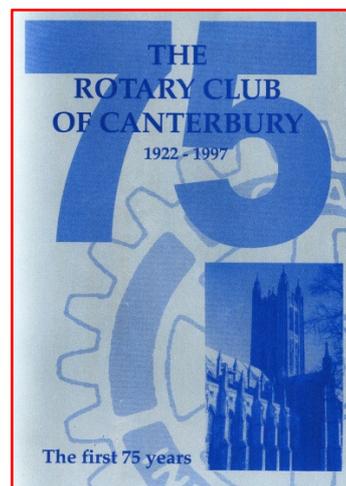


In March I represented the Club at the Inner Wheel Annual Interclub Luncheon and was guest speaker at a Forest of Blean Rotary Club dinner when their President was Mike Hockley who was my predecessor here in Canterbury – remembering the Lloyds Bank Black Horse, we were billed as the 'Thoroughbred Rotarians'! The following month Jean & I attended the RIBI Conference in Blackpool where I once again met our National President, Keith Barnard-Jones. Despite his letter of thanks following his visit to our Club he again expressed his appreciation for the warmth of welcome, which he had received the previous November.

Kentish Gazette reporter, Amanda McDine was our nominee and joined three others plus a Rotarian leader for a one month Group Study Exchange trip to Japan during late March and most of April. Amanda reported back to her Editor and we received weekly reports in our local press recounting her experiences on her West meets East trip of a lifetime. Some months later she visited the club as our guest speaker, to give a first hand view on her trip.

The next big event was the 25<sup>th</sup> Pentangular Anniversary with our Club as hosts. A select, or should I say selected small committee had worked well over many months to set up a varied programme which included a reception at St. Edmund's School followed by dinner in Rotarians' homes on Friday. We split into three groups on Saturday for a Kentish Villages coach tour with stopovers at Wickhambreaux for Morris Dancing on the village green, Bishopsbourne for a demonstration by village smithy, Len Hutton plus coffee & toilet break and Chilham for a central village tour and short concert by the choir and the campanologists working their wonders on the church bells. A late lunch in the open air in Rotarians' homes resulted in an equally late finish which left little time for shopping!

A special six course meal at The King's School with entertainment between courses, Camilla Pay – Harpist, Henry Dagg – Musical Sawyer and our own trio of PP's Vic Banks, John Harris and John Hill with their fine rendition of Three English Gentlemen.



We danced the night away to the sounds of the Nat/West Jazz Band. Bright and early on Sunday a very moving ecumenical service was held in St. Mary's Church, Bishopsbourne with input from all clubs. An alternative was a walk through the hopfields arranged by PP Barry Rice.

The Duke of York's Military School at Dover was the venue for lunch on Sunday and what a feast; one comment I heard was 'this weekend has been like attending one wedding banquet after another'. The 400 Ecu donations from each Pentangular Club plus the proceeds from the traditional 'gallon of whisky' raffle which also included the beautiful ironwork piece which our village smithy had made during the 3 coach tour visits and then donated, meant we had over £2000-00 to distribute. The local St. John Ambulance was in urgent need of a Resusci Anne (cardiac model) plus 20 belts/pouches for the junior badgers section, which we were able to provide in full. On the Thursday prior to Pentangular and the following Thursday, the Kentish Gazette printed a full page about our aims, objectives and local achievements; we are so grateful for the media support we are given.

As the RI Convention was being held in the British Isles, Jean and I went to Scotland in June for the 'Rotary International – Glasgow Convention' which PP. Sidney and Irene Roe also attended. There was a worldwide attendance and it was a real pleasure to be there and to show the name of Canterbury, UK to the wider family of Rotary. Later in the month Jean and I were joined by Tim and Maggie Brett for a visit to the St. Quentin club who were celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. As we were one of the sponsoring clubs it was a great honour to be in the visiting party at such a special anniversary.

We decided to commemorate our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by purchasing and engraving two benches for use at our Headquarters, St. Lawrence Ground and to dedicate them to our two Past Presidents who died during our 75<sup>th</sup> year. The dedication was done in the Autumn. My last pleasurable task was to present to our oldest member, 94 year old Jack Parkin – who had been featured in the first of the full page Kentish Gazette articles mentioned above – an inscribed silver tray, in recognition of his 60 years in Rotary. He wrote afterwards, 'it was one of the finest days in my life'.

So ended a very busy and eventful year. Now I can prepare to give Jean the same support she gave me when she takes up the Inner Wheel of Canterbury Presidential Chain in the year of their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – what a coincidence or were we set up!!!!

Mike Talbot

Prepared in April 2010