

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2014/15

At the Club Assembly in July 2104, at the start of my Presidential year, I set out my hopes for the club during my year. I expressed a view that, as society changes, so we need to adapt to take into account the needs of the community and the demands on our members. There is no urgency to introduce radical changes but it is vital that we think how we wish to develop over the next 5 years.

My priorities were:

- To focus on serving our community
- To improve awareness of the wider Rotary movement
- To start a debate on the future direction of the club
- To clarify and streamline the administration
- To improve communication.

I believe we have achieved some progress in each of these areas, but there is more to do over the coming years.

I was keen to continue to support a broad range of people and organisations, locally and internationally. Because of my enthusiasm for developing young talent, I was very pleased with the success of our summer concert at Canterbury Christchurch University by John Paul Ekins. The concert produced a substantial surplus which we donated to the University's Music Scholars Fund. We also developed an excellent relationship with the University's Music Department and the President Elect is planning another concert next year to nurture this relationship.

I have also been very pleased with the success this year of the Millennium Scholarship Fund. Special efforts were made to improve publicity for the Fund. This has resulted in a good number of applications and awards of grants to young people, who will benefit greatly from the experience of helping needy people in developing countries.

I attended an excellent District Conference in October and was inspired by accounts of some of projects undertaken by other clubs and by Rotary Foundation. Unfortunately, only very few members from our club attended and I have been surprised by the lack of enthusiasm for the work of the wider Rotary. In contrast, I have been particularly pleased by recent successes in attracting District Grants for our projects. We now have proven expertise in grant applications within the club and this should help us to fund more projects in future years.

It may be no surprise that many members have a stronger empathy towards local charities but I believe the international dimension of Rotary is important. I am pleased that we continue to support a number of projects in the developing world; the support of organisations like ours is critical to providing education opportunities for young people in countries like South Sudan. Yet again, we have responded magnificently with substantial emergency contributions towards Shelterbox. The Club continued to make significant annual contributions to Rotary Foundation and to PolioPlus, through member subscription and through social events, such as Ascot Day, organised by Richard Kemball-Cook.

In January, I asked members to fill in a questionnaire to gauge opinions on a range of topics concerning the club. The results were very interesting and should help us to identify the most important areas to address when planning the future of the club. I believe we will need to agree a common vision and establish a clear understanding of how we wish to go forward. This exercise was just the first phase of that process which, I know, Peter Hermitage and Martin Ward, who will serve as Presidents over the next 2 years, will continue.

I have initiated a few changes to our business and administrative procedures. Whilst not wishing to get bogged down in bureaucratic processes, it is important to make sure that we function as efficiently as possible and use new technology, in particular our website, to relieve the burden on officers. I have sought to clarify the roles of the various committees to try and avoid duplication. I have also sought to stimulate

debate amongst members at Business Meetings on important topics. I believe we need to do more to inform and involve all members.

Modern communication is a challenge and a mystery for many of our generation but we cannot afford to ignore how the world is changing if we wish to remain relevant in serving our community. I should like to commend the work of Martin Ward and Robin Hendy in leading the way on improving communication.

There is general consensus that Membership is the most important challenge for the club. Unfortunately, at the start of the year we lost three members for personal reasons. I am pleased to say that we have managed to find three excellent new members in the course of the year, so far. However, we must continue to encourage new people to join us and to make us stronger.

I was very pleased by the success of our Guest Nights. In July we joined the Friends of Canterbury Festival for a Gilbert and Sullivan night at Mount Ephraim. In September, we enjoyed hearing the remarkable wartime story of Richard Kemball-Cook's grandmother. In March, we held a party to celebrate the Inner Wheel's 90th Anniversary.

As ever, our Christmas Dinner was a great occasion and we were joined by our Honorary Member Lord Carey. We were entertained by the music and humour of the Good Gnus. I was delighted to confirm the award of two Paul Harris Fellowships, to Tony Pomeroy and Leslie Stephenson.

For the first time, Rotary participated in the Remembrance service at the Buttermarket. I was honoured to lay a wreath on behalf of all the three Canterbury clubs. As in previous years, many of our members assisted the Royal British Legion with the Poppy Appeal collections.

The club has traditionally supported the Lord Mayor's Christmas Gift Fund and this was the case again this year. In addition, we co-hosted a band concert to raise money for this worthy charity.

The two main fund raising events were again the Duck Race and Top Choir Kent. These generate very significant funds, totalling about £15,000, which are important to support the work of our main spending committees.

The organising of these events requires a great deal of effort but, I believe, they show the club at its best with a large number of members helping in some way.

An additional street collection was organised, at very short notice, to raise funds to help the relief effort for the victims of the devastating earthquake in Nepal in April. The collections and special donations raised a magnificent £2,400 which was channelled through local Rotary clubs to help victims.

The Club enjoyed a very successful Pentangular weekend at Leuven, with our 4 partner clubs. There was a very good turnout of Canterbury members and this resulted in our regaining the Pentangular clock. The Leuven club organised a very good programme of events and very generous hospitality. We spent the Saturday visiting the European Institutions in Brussels.

Traditionally, the final social event of the year is the safari supper. Yet again, this proved a popular event and was much enjoyed by all.

I nominated The Fifth Trust as the President's Charity for the year. This charity supports adults with learning difficulties by providing employment opportunities locally, long and short term residential accommodation, and respite for carers. During the year, collections and competitions were held and the proceeds were allocated to the President's Charity. These were: the special collection at the Christmas Dinner, the competition for Sailor Ted and the Caption competition. Cheques totalling about £800 were presented to the Fifth Trust.

Looking back, the year flashed by and, on the whole, I enjoyed the experience immensely. I gave the job all I've got, and it took more of my time than I had expected. I do feel privileged to have served as President of a very special club.

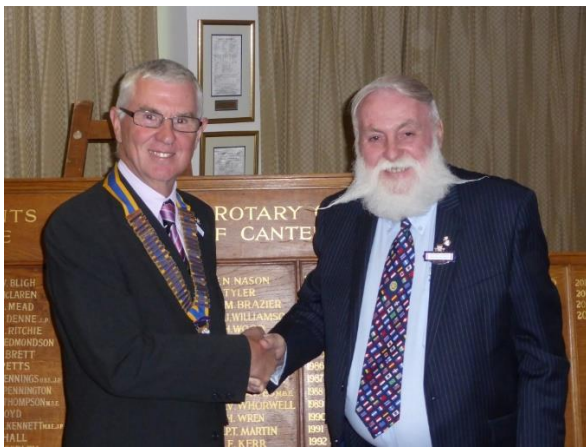
At the Handover meeting, I explained that during the Pentangular weekend, our hosts presented all the Presidents with a trophy to mark our friendship. They suggested that the trophy should be used by each

club as an award for special service. I decided to make the award, this year, to the individual member (excluding the senior members and Chairs of the main committees) who, throughout the year, has contributed most to the effective running of the club. I presented the award to Sharon Jordan.

To conclude, I should like to thank the members of the Club for their support and for showing faith in me. I thank everyone who has contributed in their own way to serving the club and our community in the true spirit of Rotary.

Viv Pritchard
President of the Rotary Club of Canterbury 2014-15

PICTURE GALLERY



Handover to new President Viv by Past President Geoff Goodban – July 2014



Lenham Town Crier Jez announcing Duck Race



Crowds at Duck Race in Westgate Gardens – July 2014

The Catering Team at the Hospital Fair BBQ – August 2014



The 5 Pentangular Presidents with Spouses at Leuven – May 2015

The Christmas Dinner 2014 – introducing the The Good Gnus

and Lord Carey presenting Paul Harris Awards to Leslie Stephenson and Tony Pomeroy



Special Guest Night to celebrate 90th Birthday of the Canterbury Inner Wheel – March 2015



*Top Choir Kent Gala Concert – April 2015
Finale with all 7 choirs singing the Beatles' "Help"*



*Handover to President Peter Hermitage –
June 2015*