

MY PRESIDENTIAL YEAR 2010/11 (ROBERT YONGE)

INTRODUCTION

It was with some apprehension that I embarked upon the role as President. I was very conscious that I was still a relatively new Rotarian who was about to become President of a Club whose members had over 1,200 years of service to Rotary between them. However I need not have worried as the support I received from the membership was tremendous.

My twin aims for my term as President were for a year of fun and to direct the Club's activities a little more towards service in the community than had been the case in the recent past. The year had many moments of fun but there were also moments of sadness. We lost three very well respected members, Robin Quarrell, Frank Wood and John Sullivan. In addition two of our guest speakers also passed away.

FUND RAISING

Despite the unfavourable financial climate, considerable funds were raised. The second Top Choir Kent Competition was a great success and the collections for the Pakistan and Japanese disasters were more successful than I had anticipated. I was very pleased with the support for my own personal choice of charity ie the Pilgrims Hospice. A total in excess of £1,700 was raised via the Club's Christmas dinner, the President's 'At Home' new year buffet luncheon and the bucket collection at the conclusion of the Top Choir Kent competition.

CONTACT CLUBS

The year saw a closer relationship between the local contact Clubs and in particular with the Forest of Blean. Members from the contact Clubs joined us for a successful evening at the resurrected evening cocktail party during Canterbury cricket week. Members from these Clubs also assisted with the street collection in aid of the Japanese disaster. In addition members from the Forest of Blean joined us for a post Canterbury Festival supper and members of our Club attended a Forest of Blean supper meeting a few weeks latter. May this closer relationship continue.

PENTANGULAR, ST QUENTIN and THE PRESIDENTS AWAY WEEKEND

The Pentangular visit to Ludenschied was well supported during which I made a very amateurish introductory speech in German. Tim Brett won the cup for the best gross score in the golf competition and as expected we won the 'dreaded clock' which is awarded to the visiting club with the most participants.

Although the number of participants to the St Quentin weekend was relatively light, everyone enjoyed themselves and my farewell speech in French was a considerable improvement on my speech in German at the Pentangular.

Much to my relief, the President's Away Weekend to Christchurch was greatly enjoyed by everyone. The hotel and food were excellent and we were very fortunate to have two very good informal after dinner talks. Sheila Boyd-Howell told us about Gordon Selfridge (the founder of Selfridges the dept store) and his connection with Highcliffe Castle which was situated very close to our hotel. Peter Booth a Rotarian friend of mine from the Rotary Club of Wareham told us about the life in the year of

the Poole Harbour Master. We were also treated to a private tour of Highcliffe Castle which was arranged by Philippa Davies.

CLUB COMMITTEES

All the Club's committees were very active during the year. As part of my plans that we should do more for the community, we organised three prostate cancer awareness days. One took place at Boots and the other two at Marks & Spenser. Another new venture was a first aid course for members on resuscitation which was organised by David Barton. In addition the annual stroke awareness day took place.

GHANA HOSPITAL PROJECT

The year saw this joint Pentangular project almost completed, As a consequence the Club was selected by District to make a presentation on the Project to the annual District conference in Eastbourne as an example of what can be achieved when a number of Clubs from different countries work together on a joint project.

PAUL HARRIS FELLOWSHIPS

Unlike Clubs in some parts of the world our Club never hands these out lightly. My year was no exception. However awards were made to two very deserving members. The award to John Harris was in recognition of his long and outstanding service to the local community and the Club culminating in his valuable contribution to the Top Choir Kent competition. Whilst the award to Roddy Tyndale-Biscoe took into account his valuable service to the Club, it was his work in aid of the hospital fete that was particularly relevant. For more than 13 years he had been the `king pin` as regards the annual K&C hospital fete and as a direct consequence of his efforts over £130,000 have been raised during this period.

SOCIAL EVENTS

In recognition of the unfavourable financial environment I ensured that a number of low cost social events were held. These being the evening cocktail party during Canterbury cricket week, An American supper at Vernon Holme School, a fish and chip supper at The Dominican Priory, a picnic supper prior to attending a performance by the Old Stagers during cricket week and the President's new year buffet luncheon at my home. These were all well attended and were proof that high profile events are not always necessary to ensure a successful and enjoyable event.

In addition two formal dinners were held as well as the usual Christmas dinner at which Rotarian George Carey was in his usual fine form.

IN CONCLUSION

I have only mentioned a few of the activities which took place during my year. However it was because of the hard work by so many members that not only was the Club awarded a Rotary International President's Citation in recognition of all it had achieved during the year but it was one of only three clubs in the District to receive a certificate of distinction.

Well done everyone.