



## Club of Swindon



**CREATE HOPE  
in the WORLD**

## Club Bulletin July/ August 2023

### The Editor's musings....

I was delighted to receive several favourable comments following the reappearance of this club bulletin: it seems that it has been missed by quite a few of you, so here goes with another edition. As you will read below, the new Rotary year has started well with several social events as well as some effective fund-raising!

### **and from the Club President....**

#### **Cavalier Behaviour**

I regularly visit my 93 year old mother in a care home in Huntingdon. Oliver Cromwell was born in her care home and he was later the MP for the town. These visits allow me occasionally to attend meetings of Huntingdon Rotary – Cromwell Club. The fact that they propose a toast to “The King” greatly amuses me. When I mentioned this to a friend he suggested that any Huntingdon Rotary – King Club might in return propose a toast to Oliver Cromwell....

#### **Speakers' Corner**

I continue to give a variety of talks. In the last few months I have spoken (1) once on the future of the Monarchy and (2) three times on survival techniques (I used to be a Special Forces survival instructor). In the next few months I am speaking about (1) leadership and motivation (2) Swindon Computer Museum (which I founded 20 years ago) (3) Special Operations Executive (to Bridgend Rotary) (4) Intelligence Agencies (to Nailsworth Rotary) and (5) Heroism.

All the Best, Jeremy

#### **A few dates for your diary**

August 31st: Evening meeting at Fox and Hounds, Wroughton

September 15th : Wine tasting at Magnums (proceeds to Harbour Project)

#### **Recent meetings....is this what you missed.....?**

**July 20th:** In a remarkably eloquent and confident presentation from one so young, Ella Kahan-Taylor gave an interesting talk on how she came to be the author of a published novel. Ella explained how, as a younger child she had been extremely nervous and totally lacking in self-confidence, and the trauma of the covid lockdown had made matters worse, to such an extent that she lost all her hair through alopecia. Encouraged by her mother, she decided to put her feelings into writing: slowly a novel emerged charting the progress of a third party character who was shadowing the emotional crisis that Ella herself was experiencing. Contact ultimately with a sympathetic publisher specialising in the writings of young people and mentored by them, her novel emerged and is selling, if not well, is nonetheless selling.

She describes it as a journey into self-acceptance and when asked by club members as to what her message is, she wisely said "My message is aimed at young people and it is this: 'change is normal' , young people need to learn to accept change in their lives". She has certainly learned to face up to her fears and has changed very dramatically!

The title is **"Stars cannot shine without darkness"** and retails at £8.99.

**July 27th** saw a return visit by John Farrow of the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust who gave an interesting presentation on the work going on locally as well as plans for the future. He took us through the history of the canals that were the lifeblood of the local economy in the late 18th and early 19th century. Constructed between 1795 and 1810 the Wilts and Berks (with its later spur that ran north from Swindon to Cricklade) was an important link between two existing canals and ran between Semington and Abingdon. However, the development and subsequent growth of the rail network put an end to the commercial value of the canals and they were abandoned in 1914. The enterprising Canal Trust, was formed in 1997 with the aim of restoring a navigable route for leisure and community use. Currently there are only relatively short stretches of open water - notably the run through Wichelstowe where their narrow boat "Firefly" regularly takes trippers - but it is hoped to link these stretches, and a route has been identified which would circumvent the urban sprawl of Swindon and ultimately restore the full length of a canal that could lead to a leisure 'bonanza' with all manner of commercial leisure facilities in what is hoped will be a recreational

resource. John was able to display some of the tremendous variety of flora and fauna that can be spotted along the towpath today.

He ended with a plea for volunteers - not just in labouring along disused stretches of the old canal route, but in serving in their visitor/information centre, or for lawyers and engineers who might be able to act in an advisory capacity.

### **August 3rd**

In a fairly dynamic address, the District Governor, Ann Bartholomew, urged us all to keep up the good work that she knew we were doing. She took as the theme of her talk the slogans chosen by RI President, Gordon McNally and her own choice for her year as DG: "Create Hope in the World" and "Stronger Together". Her message which came across clearly can be summed up in a few of the 'soundbites' :

- team work is essential
- value the skills and expertise of older rotarians
- little things can make a big difference
- increasing membership is important but retaining members is critical
- Look after each other
- make yourself known in your community

Ann recognised that as far as she could tell our club was doing well in all these areas and congratulated us on our success. She ended with something of a plea that as many as were able should join in the District Weekend Conference that will take place next June in Exeter.

### **August 10th**

Jane Milner-Barry was a guest speaker and gave a very interesting and at times provocative presentation

on the subject of sustainability. She admitted that it is a subject that can be rather too technical and at best is "not much fun" but given the issues that are becoming increasingly self-evident across the world, it was clear that her worries are worries that we all share....the media has been filled with the horror stories from the Mediterranean, China, USA, Canada and Hawaii, where excessive weather conditions have made their impact felt. On a personal front for more than 30 years she has been an ardent supporter of collecting and recycling as much waste as possible, and now as a Parish Counsellor is trying hard to promote sustainability as a topic across the town. When it comes out, Jane urged us to join in the consultation on the Local Plan which will include sustainability - and in particular the separate collection of food waste ( in the future it is destined for anaerobic digestion and the production of useful gases, rather than incineration and even more CO2.) She also pointed out that the local authority is taking steps to improve housing - absence of gas for heating, and the use of ground source heat pumps and improved insulation - and to increase provision of chargers for electric cars. She particularly vaunted the introduction of the "solar together" scheme to encourage greater use of solar panels and batteries.

It was good to note that Jane had done her homework and was aware that worldwide Rotary is doing its bit towards improving sustainable resources in many different areas but as she gently pointed out to us, perhaps we might be more active in lobbying both locally and nationally!

Interesting questions and comments from club members indicated that it was a topic which had struck a chord with all of us.

### **August 17th**

This was a our monthly business meeting during which we heard that our finances are in a sound condition, and our committees working well planning lots of activities for the coming months. It was a joy to receive a report on the recent picnic afternoon for the Swindon Downs Group (see below) and the meeting endorsed the proposal of the club council to formally become " a white ribbon supporter" in the fight against Domestic Abuse - more of that anon.

### **Recent Events**

#### **President's Night 14th July**

Wrag Barn Gold Club was Rob's chosen venue to celebrate his year in office and 37 members, partners and friends turned out to enjoy a lovely evening together.

We started with a quite a moving presentation of two Paul Harris Awards to Catherine Weaver and Jane Leighton who were the crucial non-rotarian players in the financial delivery of the Radiotherapy Centre and Peter Wells reminded us all what truly remarkable achievement that had been.

An excellent three-course meal followed and then we were treated to an interesting talk by Rob (with interventions by Jeremy!) on his home city of Nottingham. We learned much of its history (and it wasn't all about Robin Hood and wicked Sheriff!), we learned much about its famous sons and daughters, industrialists, scientists, entertainers and sportsmen. Finally, in an obviously heartfelt few moments, Rob ran through the many activities that had made his year as president so memorable for him and helped us all recall the dozens of activities that had made for such a great year for the whole club.



*President Jeremy with Jane (L) and Catherine (R)*



*President Jeremy, Fung Yee and Past President Rob*

**Note:**

In grateful thanks for the honour afforded them both Catherine and Jane have written very fulsomely to thank the club for the awards; I extract a few sentences from Jane's letter:

*....heartfelt thanks for making us so welcome on Friday. What a wonderful night! I so enjoyed it. Lovely to spend time catching up with you and everyone on our table as well as to see so many other familiar and friendly faces. The food was delicious and Rob's tour of Nottingham fantastic! Please pass on my thanks to Rob, Jeremy and all the members for welcoming us so warmly on the evening.*

*I am still speechless at being awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship! Thank you so much. Both Catherine and I feel very honoured and proud to accept them as*

*representatives of Brighter Futures. Working on the Global Grant with you all was such a privilege and it has been amazing to see all the hard work you put in come to fruition! Your team devoted so much time and effort, especially on top of all the effort that goes into fundraising and the Swindon Ball.*

### **Croquet at Belmont Crescent**

The Harbour Project is President Jeremy's chosen charity this year and his fundraising kicked off with a fun afternoon of croquet on his back lawn. Sadly the bad weather may have deterred some club members but a gallant few, together with members of the Harbour 'team' had an enjoyable time and a very pleasant tea.



The event raised £320 to swell the coffers of this very worthy charity that does so much to assist refugees and asylum seekers who fetch up in Swindon!

### **Downs Syndrome Afternoon Picnic**

Having donated £500 towards the event, some of our club members went along to Coate Water on 9th September to help out where they could (and joined in the fun as well!)



"Hear no evil, See no evil and Speak no evil" but which is which?!!!