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1921



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# HUB

## Rotary Club of the City of Wolverhampton

[www.rotaryclubwolverhampton.co.uk](http://www.rotaryclubwolverhampton.co.uk)

Service above self



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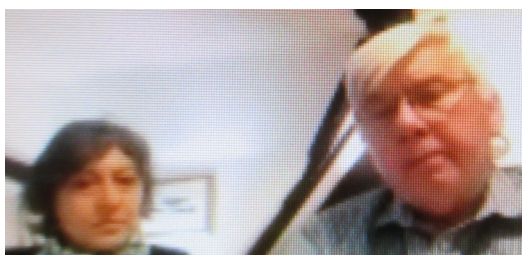
March 2021

### A Perilous Situation

After a muted Christmas and New Year on 6<sup>th</sup> January the whole UK is in lockdown and schools are closed to save the NHS – more problems for Chancellor Rishi Sunak. There are more than 30 000 in hospital and 60 000 new Corona cases each day, the average daily death rate is 685 and the total deaths 77 346. Well over 1 million have been vaccinated, with AstraZeneca/Oxford now rolling out beside Pfizer/ BioNTech, but there is also talk of variants being differently resistant to vaccines! It is intended to vaccinate 13 million people in 6 weeks – a tall order. Most of Europe appears to be in the same boat – at least EU members have ratified, as we have, the Brexit deal. There is complete silence on the China front – what are they up to apart from making arrests in Hong Kong? There have now been some 300 000 deaths in the USA, but today's problem is a Trump-incited storming of the Capitol as Congress formally registers Joe Biden's victory.

### Club Meeting by Zoom on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Richard Green has done a couple more Two Ronnies gigs, the Samaritans fundraising via the signed Wolves shirt is going well and the Christmas Appeal 'surplus' will be added to the Small Grants Scheme. President Brian reported briefly on yesterday's Governing Council: the new Cosford CO will hopefully be persuaded to come and talk to us, Tim Dukes has suggested a music/orchestra focus for his father's legacy to the club, charitable giving is receiving a rethink and Julie Hickman's activities will result in a donation to the Foodkind refugees charity. Paul Lockley was unable to draw the Rollover Raffle because the winner was not present. (It turned out to be Mike Boyce who didn't win the dosh.) So we arrived quite early at the 'speaker slot' and Crispin Reed took the floor – virtually. He has spent most of his career in advertising and now sits on various boards, runs his own Skyscraper Consulting and coaches an Under 14 football team. His talk was based on his book *The 7 Myths of Middle Age*, starting with the Over 50 stereotype and maintaining very persuasively that the Michael Parkinson type adverts could be more sensitive. 50 year olds may well have more than 30 years ahead of them, probably have more wealth than other groups and are not 'grumpy' but have more 'life satisfaction'. He invited us to refer to 'Socio-emotional selectivity theory', smash the stereotypes, live for the present and rage against the dying of the light (pace Dylan Thomas). We all applauded. (We think 60 is the new 40!)



### Committee Reports and Returning Swallows

Richard Green is still in demand for his Two Ronnies sketch which he does in aid of Jaipur Limb. His CAC reports that the Wolves Shirt raffle in aid of Samaritans will end at the end of January and has earned over £800 to date. It is also reported that Charles Cox has agreed to stand as President, that the idea of a glamour Centenary project has been shelved in favour of a Global Grant proposal and that The Jack Hayward Suite has been booked for our Centenary Dinner on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Mike Colley reported on the hard shift he has put in to promote The Memories Live On in place of our Tree of Remembrance – it has realised £4675.24, £1150 for each of 4 charities. We were thanked very sincerely by Peter Williams (MS Centre), Sally Woods (Compton Care) and Hayley Powell (The Haven). The Club's Charitable Trust will also receive a cheque and the assembled members applauded Mike and his helpers (including family). Sylvia Morgan reported on a positive and convivial meeting of membership Committee and Stuart Williams on a similarly good meeting of the young Citizen of the Year steering committee (see Bulletin for details). Alan and Helena Walters had a few minutes to tell us about the dire state of South Africa where she has relatives and he part owns (and runs) Cape Medical Response: 'the country has gone downhill'. People do not feel safe. Both the Walterses – he is now part of a Ludlow medical practice, feel better to be here. Many of us shared Sylvia's deep regret for that beautiful country. Mel Eves was confident that 'it will all sort itself out'.

## Coronavirus etc

In late January 2021 Joe Biden is in office, signing executive orders to undo some of Trump's mischief and putting in place a strategy to deal with COVID (more than 400 000 American deaths to date) . In the UK exporters are getting to grips with the new paperwork required by the EU. Vaccine injections are increasing apace (6.57m by 25<sup>th</sup> January). The NHS is up against it however ; new daily cases number more than last April, deaths each day are also higher. Is it wishful thinking that these numbers are beginning to decline? The death total is 98 531 and rising. When will the surge tail off we all wonder. Some people are apparently behaving like ostriches and refusing the vaccine! Others are holding illicit raves or weddings! The UK has the highest death rate in Europe and the government is resisting calls for loosening controls. 'Until we end the pandemic everywhere we won't defeat it anywhere'.

### Past President Roger Fellows 25.9.1937-3.2.2021

Roger died at New Cross Hospital leaving behind Margaret, his wife of 50 years, his son Simon, daughter Rebecca and granddaughter Jessica. After Wolverhampton Grammar School he followed his father into Accountancy and had a very successful career with the enjoyable add-on of lecturing to Business Studies students at The Polytechnic. He was an Ironbridge Gorge Trustee, Tax Commissioner, a General Commissioner of Income Tax and ,via the Worshipful Company of Chartered Accountants, a Freeman of the City of London. (As he told us from time to time, this latter entitled him to drive sheep over London Bridge!) He enjoyed a laugh, a lot of sports, holidays in Italy and following Wolverhampton Wanderers. He was a Round Tabler for years and a member of Bilston RC before he joined our Club. When he became President in 2015 he preferred the social and representational side to administration and his Valedictory speech remembers an excellent district conference in Llandudno, Jerry Hobbs's BEM evening, the City Remembrance Service, the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration, a visit to the north-east including Durham cathedral, a jazz evening at Stableford. We will miss you Roger and send our condolences to Margaret. SW



### Club Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February

The Wolves shirt has raised £1150 so far. Committee funds and Charitable Giving will have to be reduced. Another piece of bad news is that St Georges will close down – it is hoped that some of their members may join our club. Hayley Powell came to thank us again for the recent cheque and report on the latest news from The Haven. They were able to take advantage of the Big Give Christmas Challenge to increase their donations from clubs like ours – very necessary because of the surge in 'cases'. Different types of domestic abuse are emerging ; she mentioned 'reproductive coercion' and intimidation via pets. Gemma was only able to leave with her child when a Dogs Trust

fostered Rusty. They battle on but perpetrators continue to get away with it. A Domestic Abuse Bill is reportedly on the way- but don't hold your breath! President Brian thanked her for a very good overview.

### Walsall and Wolverhampton

There was a good turnout for this joint meeting on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, the 116<sup>th</sup> birthday of Rotary – the screenshot shows about half of the audience. From her kitchen in Guernsey Jannine Birtwistle made a clarion call on behalf of Rotary Foundation with its 4 star rating from Charity Navigator. Jannine is most inspired by the Peace objective but is also RGBI's lead of the End Polio Campaign which is still striving hard (along the 1240 kilometre border between Pakistan and Afghanistan). She urged us to apply for grants, scholarships, support Vocational Training Teams and Peace Centres (e.g. the University of Bradford). (Incidentally the Polio network is contributing greatly to the COVID response.) She was thanked for her 'inspirational presentation' and we moved onto club business, in particular preparations for our Centenary arrangements. Walsall's President will be Dr Makunda and they are planning a dinner on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 at Walsall Football Club, one hundred years after their first 'Interest Meeting'. Wolverhampton with President- to- be Richard Green is planning similar at the Jack Hayward Suite at Molyneux on 20<sup>th</sup> May. Led by their presidents Deep Kapoor and Brian Bailey both clubs have been holding successful meetings by zoom and raising money by adapting schemes : Walsall's Santa Sleigh morphed into Santa Letters and Wolverhampton's Tree of Remembrance became The Memories Live On. Walsall is aiming for a 'civic project' and Wolverhampton a Global Grant to mark their 100 years. In a final word DG Ken Wagstaffe declared his pleasure at hearing expressions of enthusiasm from both clubs



## Vaccine Roll-Out

More than 20m vaccinated by the end of February and Boris's position in the polls has improved. We wonder if the proposed dates for a path out of lockdown will stick - schools and colleges open on 8<sup>th</sup> March, hairdressers may open on 12<sup>th</sup> April and pubs may serve people outside, end of legal limits on contact by 21<sup>st</sup> June. (We wish.) Meanwhile Chancellor Rishi presents a budget in early March; he says he needs to support the economy but also to 'level with people'. In Germany and France they seem to be rowing back on their criticism of AstraZeneca, not having been tested much on over 65s. My old friend Gerhard notes that Commission President Mrs Von der Leyen seems to have 'messed up' (vermurkst) her job of planning the vaccination campaign for the EU. They are vaccinating fast in the USA - but watch out for the return of Donald. Covax is a scheme to help the world vaccinate and it has begun by sending quantities of vaccine to Ghana. The Russian vaccine Sputnik V is achieving some prominence. The Chinese are keeping quiet about their vaccine(s).



## Membership Committee

Sylvia Morgan writes : In Dec I took over as Membership chair. This was the first time they had met as a group since the beginning of the new Rotary year. Jerry had just left and Covid was at its height. We were all feeling a bit down hearted like most people. However I'm pleased to say we did the British thing and kept calm and carried on. We did what we needed to do and decided to meet every 6 weeks at 6-30 via zoom. Topics for discussion were decided by the members. This was the only way at this time that we could focus on their need to know Rotary and for them to ask questions. Difficult if you are in a club meeting on zoom. Since then I believe we have gelled as a team and discussed club structure, technology, fundraising and committees. I believe that we have some really good ideas being brought forward which you will see coming to fruition soon. There are around 5 new members attending on each occasion so a good turn out from our 7 this year. One of our new members is on the front line working away from home so unable to attend. All in all I feel that their commitment during this difficult time has been commendable and I think the club will give them a platform to develop for the benefit of our city. I can also confirm that I have been in touch with St. George's Rotary Club and have spoken individually to their members and I am hopeful that some will join us next year. Also I have two contacts who are interested to talk with us further about membership. Hope this spreads a little light on what we have been up to in M&D. Looking forward to seeing you all soon. Keep well and stay safe. YIR Sylvia.

## Club Meeting and Rainforest

No visits to report on 9<sup>th</sup> February. The Small Grants Scheme has 18 applications to sift. Peter Wright failed to pick a joker and win the Rollover dosh. And then we were ready to listen to Chris Redston, chief executive of Rainforest Trust UK. The UK arm works closely with the American Rainforest Trust to protect this world asset which provides 20% of our oxygen and stores 250 billion tons of carbon dioxide on 10% of world land distributed throughout the Tropics. Chris was able to retire early and devote himself to combating the damage caused by deforestation in various ways. The trust works by Land Purchase (with a local NGO partner), Land Designation (as a national park or community reserve etc) and Indigenous Land Titling (e.g. 6.1 million acres in the Amazon). Last year 148 (of the total 190) protected areas experienced less than 5% deforestation. The gains are striking in saved bird and animal species and trees. And an anonymous American philanthropist is doubling all donations. However the climate change inducing dangers from loggers, palm oil growers and politicians in denial continue. President Brian expressed our 'thanks to a local lad'. Chris described the meeting as 'bostin'.



## With salutations to W.B.Yeats and others.

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree  
I'll sanitise the doorknob and make a cup of tea.  
I won't go down to the sea again. I won't go out at all.  
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.  
There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the north of Katmandu  
But I shan't be seeing him just yet and nor, I think, will you.  
While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay  
I'll make my bit of supper and eat it off a tray.  
I shall not speed my bonnie boat across the sea to Skye

Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.  
About the woodland, just right now, I am not free to go  
To see the Keep Out posters or the cherry hung with snow.  
And no, I won't be travelling much, within the realms of gold,  
Or get me to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.  
Give me your hand, I shan't request, albeit we are friends  
Nor come within a mile of you, until this trial ends.

**(In this anonymous spoof you can find 12 quotes from well-known poems.)**

**John Bloxham** 14.2.1943 – 10.3.2021

His grown-up children Anelli, Nick and Jonty and wife of 47 years, Susan, were with him when he passed away. He had seen his 5 grandchildren in recent days. Anelli had just made it into the UK (from Spain) in January after hearing that her father's illness was worsening. Most of us were shocked and surprised to hear the sad news because he wanted to keep quiet about his condition. He was a senior Rotarian having been a member of our club since 1982, a stalwart of the Sports and Entertainment Committee and a busy organiser at many of its events. His day job had been in the motor trade, the Fiat dealer in Wolverhampton for some years. Until recently he was undertaking driving work for Peter Posh. In his leisure hours he was very well known as a rally driver. He was in 1969 RAC National Champion, Motoring News Champion and BTRDA Gold Star Champion. He drove in the London to Mexico event in 1970, sponsored by JCB. And he was twice in the Guinness Book of Records, driving for Rotary the coast roads of Britain in the fastest time and most economically. He was a quiet and genial presence ; we will miss him greatly.



### A Quizzical Meeting

Many couples participated on March 23rd, Dawes, Hills, Morgans, Williams, Lowndes etc. After a sad moment remembering John Bloxham, minimal business was dealt with – Richard Green had introduced Jenny Seagrove to Newport Pagnell and has received a New York club banner following the joint meeting with Walsall, Sally Woods signalled that Compton care will be 40 years old next year. Then we got down to the fun in the form of a 50 question quiz covering 5 areas. Performance was bad for Richard Horrell's food and drink questions – Kvass, poutine, murcia! We picked up on Geoff Lowndes' celebrity pictures (of Bryn Terfel

etc) and scores for Richard Green's buildings (Osborne House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue). We were poor again on Paul Lockley's songs from the 1960s (something by the Shadows etc) and just about followed Peter Wright's geography tour (Yangtze ending in Shanghai – 'spell them how you want'). All in all we spent an enjoyable hour plus and Nicky Williams, daughter of Brian and Mary Woolley, won with 45 points. But 'It isn't the winning it's the taking part'. Hear, hear!

### Back to Normality Slowly?

At the end of March 21 126,592 people have died from COVID and the number is still rising, but much more slowly. The vaccination action is going ahead fast; more than 30 m. have been immunised and 3.5 m. have received their second jab. However Europe is experiencing a Third Wave so the opportunity to relax all controls is not yet here. We will have to wait a fortnight to visit the barber or hairdresser – as long as the present trend continues. And foreign holidays are a more distant dream. So the message is stick to the rules and 'steady as she goes'.

**Fraser Dukes** plaque will soon be installed on Rotary Ridge in the National memorial arboretum.



