

ROTARY CLUB OF BLYTHE BRIDGE & DISTRICT

Early Formation of the Club

In 1985 the Rotary Club of Longton, which itself was chartered in 1956, made an application to RIBI to commence a survey in the Meir area of Stoke-on-Trent to form a new Rotary Club in the District.

The application was approved and a survey was commenced by Longton Past President Gerald Lewis together with the District Extension Officer, Past District Governor Norman Stowe of RC of Burslem.

The initial survey was approved by RIBI and the necessary planning for the formation of the new Club continued.

The provisional name for the Club was "The Rotary Club of Meir & District" and suggested suitable meeting places were Boodles of Meir and The Smithfield Hotel, Blythe Bridge.

Three Rotarians from the Longton Club, namely Past President Ron Osborne, Past President Mike Bradeley and George Marsh, (who became known as "the three wise men") took on the task to develop the new Club and in 1987 a number of preparatory meetings took place.

The District Extension Officer by now was Past District Governor Bob Toon of the Rotary Club of Shrewsbury and he was assisted by Past District Governor Norman Stowe.

Preparatory meetings for the formation of the Club were held at The White Cock Public House , Uttoxeter Road, Blythe Bridge between June and November 1987. Persons attended their first meeting as follows:-

- 15th June – David Ashley, Jeremy Billington, Michael Deaville, Geoff Gascoigne, Jim Holding and Bob Pilkington the Pub Licensee
- 22nd June – John Hilton, Keith Houlston and Stan Leason
- 29th June – Carl Dale
- 3rd July – Alan Key
- 20th July – John Davies, Philip Ellis
- 27th July – Brian Harper and Roger Shepherd
- 17th August – Geoff Clay B.E.M., Steven Forrester, Peter Herward and Malcolm Thomas
- 24th August – Michael Tunncliffe
- 21st September – Peter Cooke and Robert Dean.
- 28th September – Norman Stedman
- 25th October – Alan Austin and Brian Mellor.
- 2nd November – Paul Fisher and Peter Nixon

The first recorded meeting of the Club was held on the 28th September 1987, when it was agreed that the name of the Club would be changed to "The Rotary Club of Blythe Bridge & District".

The Interim Officers elected were:-

President	John Hilton
Senior Vice President	Keith Houlston
Secretary	David Ashley
Treasurer	Jeremy Billington

Additional Council member were Mike Deaville, Phillip Ellis, Peter Herward, Jim Holding, Alan Key and Bob Pilkington. Also present at the meeting were Geoff Clay, Geoff Gascoigne and Stan Leason.

The Club decided to meet weekly, each Monday at 7.30pm, the territorial limits of the Club being Blythe Bridge, Caverswall, Draycott, Forsbrook, Meir and Weston Coyney. The annual subscription was fixed at £50.

Inaugural Meeting.

The Inaugural meeting of the interim Rotary Club of Blythe Bridge & District took place at Keele Hall, Keele University, on Thursday 12th November 1987. The 27 founder members present were:-

David Ashley	Banking Local
Alan Austin	Joinery - Manufacturing
Jeremy Billington	Pharmacy
Geoffrey Clay B.E.M.	Postal Service
Peter Cooke	Fine China Manufacturing
Carl Dale	Licensed Victualling
John Davies	Meat & Livestock Commission
Robert Dean	Engineering Manufacturing - Ceramics
Michael Deaville	Polytechnic Education
Philip Ellis	Fitted Kitchens Supply
Paul Fisher	Estate Agency
Steven Forrester	Nursing Care - Management
Geoffrey Gascoigne	Financial Consultancy
Brian Harper	Ceramics Consultancy
Peter Herward	Police Service
John Hilton	General Law Practice
Jim Holding	Grocery Retailing
Keith Houlston	Police Service
Alan Key	Stationary Retailing
Stanley Leason	Funeral Directing
Brian Mellor	Coach Painting - Commercial
Peter Nixon	Ceramics - Earthenware
Bob Pilkington	Hotels and Restuarants
Roger Shepherd	Domestic Appliances Manufacturing
Norman Stedman	Lighting Systems Distribution
Malcolm Thomas	Property Development
Michael Tunncliffe	Newsagency Retail

The Presiding Officer was District Governor George Sidebottom of the Rotary Club of Wolverhampton. The Founder President, Local Solicitor John Hilton, proposed the Inaugural Resolution to form the Club which was approved by the District Governor.

Charter.

The Club was admitted as a member of Rotary International and the Charter was issued and signed on the 20th November 1987.

The Charter was presented to the Club at a ceremony evening at Keele Hall, Keele University on Monday 22nd February 1988. 26 of the 27 founder members present at the inaugural meeting attended (one member, Brian Mellor, had resigned for personal reasons).

The following gifts were presented:-

President's jewel – The Rotary Club of Longton.
Vice President's jewel – The Rotary Club of Cheadle.
Bell – Fellow Rotarians.
Lectern – The Rotary Club of Stone.
Visitor's Book – The Rotary Club of Stoke –on-Trent.
Rotary Roundwheel – The Rotary Club of Stoke-on-Trent South.
History OF RIBI – Past District Governor Bob Toon.
Library – District Governor George Sidebottom

The wooden spoon (held by the youngest Club in the District) was presented to President John Hilton by The Rotary Club of Stafford Castle which itself was Chartered a few weeks previously on the 25th September 1987.

Progress of the Club.

From small beginnings the Club soon became well established enjoying the true fellowship that Rotary is all about.

The Club gave its very first donation of £1000 in March 1988 to Polio Plus. This is a project that is still ongoing in November 2012. Hopefully, with all the help Rotary has given, we are nearing the extinction of this awful disease.

In its first few years, the Club won the District Significant Achievement Award on no less than three occasions. First in 1991, for the building of a mobile incident caravan donated to St. John Ambulance. Second, in 1993 for the providing of a Water Well at a Leper Colony in India and the third for a project at Aynsley Special School, Aynsleys Drive, Blythe Bridge.

The Club established a strong charitable philosophy that still exists today. Many donations/contributions to local, national and international projects and good causes have benefited from the Club's funding over the years. During the last 25 years it is estimated that the Club has raised almost half a million pounds at numerous fundraising events which have been in many formats.

As well as providing funding, members of the Club have, throughout the years, assisted others less fortunate than ourselves by giving much of their time and service.

The Club has always supported RI and RIBI projects and in particular the Rotary Foundation, Rotary's own charity.

The Club has supported the Group Study Exchange programme, members having hosted young professional men and women from around the world whilst visiting this Country. Past President David Ashley was the GSE team leader when the District team visited New Zealand in 1997. The success of this visit was such that the whole team was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship.

Over the years a number of Club members have hosted visiting GSE team members and long standing friendships have been maintained.

In 2006/7 the Club sponsored an Ambassadorial Scholar, Shu Chun Chiu from Taiwan, whilst studying at Keele University. She was hosted throughout her 12 months here by late Past President Tim Hughes and his wife Julie.

Shu is now a successful business woman working in Oslo. She was made an Honorary member of the Club and is still in touch with the Club and its members today.

During 1993/94 President Jeremy Billington and Founder member Peter Nixon made enquiries to develop a Probus Club in the area. Blythe Bridge Probus Club was founded in 1994 and its first President was Mr Ken Walker. The Club is still active today with 30 members and meets at The Royal Oak Dilhome.

The Club is mixed gender but it was not until the 20th April 2011 that we were able to induct our first lady member Jan Jacobs, husband of Past President Richard.

In 2010/11 Past President Glyn Johnson was the Club's first member to serve as the District Governor for District 1210. He had a most enjoyable and successful year and certainly did his Club proud.

Sadly, during the past 25 years four members have passed to Higher Service:-

Peter Fisher (30th June 2000)

Past President Geoff Clay* B.E.M. PHF (20th January 2001)

Geoff Povey (22nd May 2010)

Past President Tim Hughes PHF (27th February 2012)

Meeting Venues

The Clubs first meeting venue was The White Cock, Uttoxeter Road, Blythe Bridge but, in October 1988 due to the fact that licensee and Club member Bob Pilkington was relocating to Yorkshire, we transferred to The Coach House (later renamed The New Plough), Uttoxeter Road, Draycott.

After this first move, and for different reasons, the Club has met at the following venues for various lengths of time:-

The Ship Inn, Cheadle Road, Tean
Draycott Arms, Draycott. (Founder member Carl Dale was the Licensee)
The New Plough, Uttoxeter Road, Draycott.
The Weathervane, Meir Park.
The Wheatsheaf, Oulton, Stone and from January 2002 until present, The Upper House, Barlaston.

It's impossible to list all the achievements of the Club in each Presidential year since its formation or each charity and other causes that the Club has assisted.

We maintain strong links with local schools to assist in the children's development. One of the annual projects is "The Life Caravan". The Shelter Box Scheme is one of the International projects to which the Club regularly contributes.

One member and his wife, John and Pat Lloyd have, for many years, been involved with the building of a Primary School in Kenya. They have been visiting Kenya for 17 years and became involved with the Mikoroshoni School at Shanza, Mombasa. They have personally raised much needed funds in the UK and with the help of our own Club and the Rotary Club of Bahari in Mombasa have been able to provide much required facilities to enable the school to function.

In recent years one of the main fundraising events has been the annual "Six Towns Challenge", a sponsored walk starting at Tunstall then through the six towns to Longton. This event was the idea of our Past President Martin Kettrick who participates in his wheelchair. We have the support of other local Clubs and the event has raised thousands of pounds for local charities and causes.

The Club is very active in all aspects of business and social matters and participates in sporting occasions by competing in District sporting events.

The Club has become well known and recognized and very much appreciates the support that the local community gives to it throughout each year.

The Club looks forward to serving the Community in all its aspects for many years to come. It will always promote Rotary locally, nationally and internationally and whilst doing so will enjoy tremendous fellowship and fun.

25th Charter Anniversary Dinner

The Club celebrated its 25th Charter Anniversary on Friday 9th November 2012, with a dinner at Moddershall Oaks, Moddershall, Near Stone, Staffs.

The Master of Ceremonies was Junior Vice President Howard Leese.

President Bill Orrell with wife Linda and members of their family, together with District Governor Trevor Davies of Rotary Club of Ironbridge with his wife Robyn were the main guests and amongst the 105 who attended.

Past President Michael Bradeley, one of the "three wise men", with wife Christine were present but Past President Ron Osborne and George Marsh were unable to attend due to ill health.

Visiting Rotarians

PDG Lynne Deavin and Bruce Boucher – RC of Eccleshall Mercia
ADG Carol Reilly – RC of Walsall Saddlers and Brian Reilly – RC of Aldridge
ADG Lindsay Bashford and Barbara – RC of Market Drayton.
President Andy Machin – RC of Leek
President Christine Jamieson – RC of Newcastle
PP Mike Deaville and Val – RC of Aberswyth
PP Brian Stone – RC of Ellesmere
PP Richard and Christine Gallagher – RC of Cheadle
PP John and Linds Brunt – RC of Audlery
PP John Milner and Rita – RC of Newcastle

Greetings.

Senior Vice President Bill Durose read out greetings to President Bill Orrell and members of the Club that were received from the following:-

Rotarian John and Pat Lloyd – RC of Blythe Bridge (visiting Kenya)
President Ralph Cooke – RC of Stafford
President George Brown – RC of Whitchurch
President Mike Evans – RC of Stafford Castle
Shu Chun Chiu from Oslo- Ambassadorial Scholar 2007
Past President and Founder Secretary David Ashley.
Past President Peter Herward
Former member John Pennington
Former member Michael Price

District Governor Trevor Davles presented a certificate from Rotary International to President Bill in recognition of the Club's 25 years of service. In addition, the District Governor presented a certificate from Rotary International to each of the five founder members still serving the Club:- Alan Austin, Keith Houlston, Alan Key, Stan Leason and Peter Nixon to commemorate their 25 years of service

Unfortunately President Bill who had throat surgery the day prior to the Dinner and was unable to present his speech himself. However his three beautiful daughters Julie, Denise and Amie each took a part in presenting it on their father's behalf and did an excellent job.

Immediate Past President Sam Lanza was unable to attend due to the fact that he was in hospital recovering from a serious illness. However, his wife Pat together with son and daughter-in-law were present representing him.

After the Dinner, entertainment for the evening was provided by Trevor Leeson, singer/guitarist/comedian who filled the venue with laughter until 12 midnight.

The evening event which was most successful and enjoyed by everyone was superbly organized by Past President Brian Mate and he rightly received many thanks and congratulations from those who attended.

Keith Houlston
20th November 2012