

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ALDRIDGE ROTARY CLUB

The Rotary Club of Aldridge R.I.B.I No: 806 was Chartered on 23rd June 1955, the fiftieth year after the founding of Rotary itself. It was doubtless a celebration year.

15th July 1953

It was on 15th July 1953 that Glen Nichols, Clerk to the Aldridge District Council, wrote to Walsall Rotary Club for guidance on the formation of a Rotary Club.

18th June 1954

The first significant reply from Rtn Leslie Phillips of Walsall Club, dated 18th June 1954, indicated that thought was being given to the formation of a Rotary Club in Aldridge. A meeting followed in Walsall attended by Dr John Stirling, Councillor Cliff Rowley and Mr Edwin Pitt. Mr Glen Nicholls and two others were unable to attend.

21st July 1954

At the meeting on 21st July 1954, it was agreed that the formation of the Rotary Club of Aldridge should proceed.

5th August 1954

The first Luncheon Meeting was held at the Elms Hotel on 5th August, at which the District Extension Officer was present.

16th September 1954

Fortnightly meetings started on 16th September 1954. Numbers rose to 20 in October 1954. Glen Nichols was elected Secretary. During October weekly meetings started.

9th December 1954

On 9th December 1954, with 25 members present, three members were nominated for President, the ballot coming out in favour of Dr John Stirling, the first and only ballot for President.

16th February 1955

The Inaugural Meeting was held on 16th February 1955 at the Stork Hotel, Walsall. Tickets cost 15 shillings.

The initial Club subscription was 3 Guineas and the entrance fee 3 Guineas.

Although there were some exceptions, most members of the Club were addressed as Mr not by Christian names.

23rd June 1955

The Rotary Club of Aldridge was Chartered on 23rd June 1955.

It was a Club in District 106 until it opted to join the new District 121.

10th October 1955

The Club actually received its Charter on 10th October 1955 from the District Chairman (now Governor) Rtn Eric Skinner at the Charter Dinner attended by 180 Rotarians and guests.

December 1955

At Xmas 1955 £35 from the Charity Account was spent on suitable gifts to old people at the Almshouses, and members of the Club devoted personal time to this first project. On the International front Aldridge supported and entertained boys for national Youth Camp, which was started in 1955 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Rotary International.

Early in its life the Club took interest in Sport, an area in which it has been prominently represented at District level. In its second year the Club started the Aldridge Industrialists Meeting, the forerunner of the A.M.A. and A.B.M.A.

Right from the start Aldridge Club prided itself on selecting outstanding speakers for its meetings, a tradition that has continued.

1957/58

In Doug Edwards' year 1957/58 the Club was instrumental in achieving what was to be known as the County Leaving Certificate for Secondary schools. At this time Career Advice was started at local schools, and a Career Exhibition was held.

1958

In 1958 the Club moved to the Parson and Clerk, where it stayed until 1962. An Essay Competition forged a sound link with local schools, and was to continue for some thirty years. Ties with St Margaret's Hospital became firm.

1961/62

In 1961/62 Aldridge Club began its close relationship with the Probation Service, an activity which has continued to this day; it received the Heyfield Trophy from an Australian Club, and achieved high attendance and fellowship visit figures.

1963

A year later Wrestling Evening became the main Charity activity followed by Boxing Evenings and Charity Speaker's Evenings, which overlapped with Boxing Evenings in the late 70's and 80's. Aldridge continued its work in the late Sixties with projects at St Margaret's Hospital, supply of a handicapped person's vehicle and much local charity work, e.g. Xmas parcels for the needy.

1973

In 1973 the Probus Club of Aldridge was formed with Norman Cook, Phil Butler, Derek Birch and others active. The Aldridge Club remained strong with a membership of 75. A good relationship existed between Rotary, Probus, and Rotaract as well as Round Table and the Ex-Tablers Club.

Visits to Rotary Boys House, holidays at West Winds, car travel for disabled, Ranfurly Library, Ockendon Venture and Youth Camp - all took prominent roles in the Rotary Calendar.

1974/75

In Phil Butler's year the first Celebrity Dinner was held; the Rotaract Club was started.

The Rotaract Club reached a height in membership of 45 in the 1990s and provided 3 Rotaract District Chairmen.

1975/76

John Ralph's year 1975/76 saw the 21st Anniversary Dinner at Moor Hall Hotel; and many local projects as well as Youth Exchange with Mount Holly in the States.

1976/77

Mac Hayward's year 1976/77 saw the first contact with Tiel Rotary Club in The Netherlands. A visit by 27 Rotarians and Ladies to Tiel in April 1977 for a three-day visit (a mishap to Doreen Cooke while skiing started the contact) which has continued with great success, meeting every 2 years alternately in the Netherlands and in England. John Ralphs became leader of the G.S.E. Team to District 967 in Australia, a role since done by Ted Edwards in Canada.

1977/78

1977/78 saw a return visit from Tiel Rotary Club and this regular exchange has continued.

1978/79

Eric Watts's year brought sporting triumphs; District Table Tennis and Cricket Champions.

The 1970's in general saw a lot of Aldridge activity on Overseas projects, e.g. Eye Camps in India, "Bull Semen", Water Aid projects, etc.

1979/1980

Tony Miner (1979/80) continued help to St Margaret's Hospital with a Resource Centre appropriate for the "Year of the Child", as well as continuing Mount Pleasant exchanges. At the 25th Anniversary Dinner a Paul Harris Fellowship was given to Dr Boyd Stirling in memory of his father.

1980/1981

In 1980/81 (Geoff Foster) a Rotary Scholarship was awarded to Louise Andrews, the first of three in the decade. The other two being Amanda Marcus - Brian Perkes year and Elspeth Franks - John Moore's year.

A main project was the Cardiac Rehabilitation Clinic, the prime mover in which was Ron McKecknie, and it proved to be a wonderful project. Ron also established (with Eric Watts) projects in Sierra Leone, Romania and Yugoslavia.

1985/1986

In 1985/86, after being District Vocational Service Chairman, District Secretary and District Governor Nominee Derek Birch became District Governor and had a busy and rewarding year. The Club honoured him with a Paul Harris Fellowship in September 1986. As District Extension Officer he formed three new Clubs.

The late 80's saw the Polio Plus Project which raised over £5000 to help Rotary International eradicate Polio in the world. Work with Oakwood School continued and has lasted over a period of 15 years, while the Essay Competition has been replaced over the last 10 years by "Youth Speaks". Close contact with schools continues in this and other activities, e.g. attending leadership lectures run by District and including as speakers Helen Sharman and Rebecca Stevens.

1986/87

Tiel Club presented a Paul Harris Fellowship to Ken Ashby in 1986/87 (Brian Perkes) "in recognition of his success in fostering the relationship between our two Clubs".

Aldridge has been a very active Club in Aldridge, in District and in Rotary International. It is proud of its achievements and its service to the community and the world at large.

Derek J Birch

Feb 2002