

Subj: **Rotary Club of Aldridge**
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File: **ROTARY CLUB OF ALDRIDGE History by DJB.doc** (21504 bytes) DL Time (44000 bps): < 1 minute

Dear District Governor Jon,

Attached herewith as requested by P.D.G. Derek Birch an A4 sheet giving brief information about the Aldridge Rotary Club which I trust will be found to be satisfactory.

Sincerely in Rotary,

Ray. M. Brant, Assistant Secretary.

ROTARY CLUB OF ALDRIDGE.

R.I.B.I. No 806

Aldridge, originally founded in 1955, was a Club in District 106 until it opted to join the new District 121 in 1972-73.

The Aldridge Club is known for its sense of humour and for Fellowship, Fun, and Activities. It has sought interesting projects in overseas fields. It sponsored eye camps in India, supplied bull semen, provided water projects for drinking water, a health centre and other projects in Sierra Leone, and "shoe boxes" for Overseas Countries – over 500 in 2001/02.

On the home front it supported the St. Margaret's Hospital complex, and essay competitions in schools which developed into the "Youth Speaks" programme now an annual event, as well as giving career advice and "practice interviews".

Perhaps the most significant project it has set up has been the much appreciated Walsall Heart Rehabilitation Centre which is highly admired and which has been the recipient of a large donation in 2001/02.

Aldridge formed a Rotoract Club in the early 70s, which reached a height in membership of 45 in the 1990s. It has declined in number but is still the largest in the District, and has provided 3 Rotoract District Chairmen.

Its Probus Club is one of the oldest, such clubs started in 1973; the Aldridge Club is strong today with a membership of 75. A good relationship exists between Rotary, Probus, and Rotoact as well as Round Table and the Ex-Tablers Club.

The membership of the Rotary Club has declined from its all-time high of 45 but now is still in the 30s.

Aldridge is proud of its activities in District 1210. It has provided a District Governor and a number of committee members

It has a yearly programme of Fellowship Visits, and has played a major part in hosting G.S.E. teams, organising visits by incoming teams, and has twice provided the team leader for an outgoing GSE team. It fully supports the Foundation Scholarship programmes and had the distinction of having scholarship candidates selected in consecutive years. One of these scholars is now an Opera singer in America.

Aldridge has twice won the District Quiz competition, but its higher age distribution has reduced its successes in the sporting field against earlier years when it was a force in Table Tennis, Snooker, Cricket, &c.

A relationship with the Tiel Rotary Club in the Netherlands started in the late 70s. It has been a great success meeting every 2 years alternately in the Netherlands and in England.

Social visits to International Restaurants have tended to succeed Dinner Parties and a Club Weekend each year in a different part of the country and other visits to Theatre, Ballet etc have become popular.

Club meetings are on the whole well attended with good interesting speakers

Membership increase is being given high priority so that an even stronger Club can add to its achievements.

D. J. Birch.

February 2002

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ALDRIDGE ROTARY CLUB

The Rotary Club of Aldridge was Chartered on 23rd June 1955, the fiftieth year after the founding of Rotary itself. It was doubtless a celebration year.

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. 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 not able to attend.

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

The first Luncheon Meeting was held at the Elms Hotel on 5th August, at which the District Extension Officer was present. Fortnightly meetings started on 16th September 1954. Numbers rose to 20 in October 1954. Glen Nichols was elected Secretary. During October weekly meetings started.

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.

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

The initial Club subscription was 3½ 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.

The Rotary Club of Aldridge was Chartered on 23rd June 1955. Only ~~Ken Ashby~~ and Ted Edwards are still members of the Club today.

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.

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 the International Youth Camp, which was started in 1955 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Rotary International.

The Ladies lost no time in forming an Inner Wheel Club and the first Ladies Luncheon was held in December 1955. Phyllis Pitt was the first President of the Inner Wheel Club.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

In 1973 the Probus Club of Aldridge was formed with Norman Cook, Phil Butler, Derek Birch and others active.

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.

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

John Ralphs' 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.

Mac Hayward's year 1976/77 saw the first contact with Tiel Club and a visit by 27 Rotarians and Ladies to Tiel in April 1977 for a three day visit (a mishap to Doreen Cook while skiing started the contact) which has continued with great success ever since. 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 saw a return visit from Tiel Club and this regular exchange has continued.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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