

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF STONE ROTARY CLUB

70 YEARS OF SERVICE

a Brief look at the history of Stone & District Rotary Club  
by Rotarian Philip Leason.

Rotary International started in 1905 in America but the idea soon spread to the U.K. and by the mid 1930's there were several Clubs around our local area. For example, Stafford's first club was formed in 1924; Stoke-on-Trent's in 1927; and Newcastle under Lyme's in 1929. These clubs - together with several more - made up a Rotary "District" which was keen to form new clubs and thereby further the aims and objectives of the movement.

Rotary International started in 1905 in America but the idea soon spread to the U.K. and by the mid 1930's there were several Clubs around our local area. For example, Stafford's first club was formed in 1924; Stoke-on-Trent's in 1927; and Newcastle under Lyme's in 1929. These clubs - together with several more - made up a Rotary "District" which was keen to form new clubs and thereby further the aims and objectives of the movement.

In 1938 it was decided to try and start a club in Stone. Representatives of many of the Rotary Clubs from throughout the Midlands attended an "interest" meeting held at the Crown Hotel in May 1938. The meeting concluded with a proposal from Mr Ernest Shufflebothan (the Manager of the District Bank) and seconded by Mr Thomas Bagley, the Chairman of Stone Urban District Council that a Rotary Club should be formed in Stone.

Mr Shufflebothan was elected the Interim President and he together with the prospective members nurtured the new Club during the early months of its formation. The Club received its Charter of Incorporation from Rotary International on 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1939 and a celebratory Dinner was held at the Crown Hotel on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1939 to mark its granting. Rotary in Stone was officially born.

In 1938 it was decided to try and start a club in Stone. Representatives of many of the Rotary Clubs from throughout the Midlands attended an "interest" meeting held at the Crown Hotel in May 1938. The meeting concluded with a proposal from Mr Ernest Shufflebothan (the Manager of the District Bank) and seconded by Mr Thomas Bagley, the Chairman of Stone Urban District Council that a Rotary Club should be formed in Stone.

During the early months of the club the threat of war in Europe was on the horizon. When war did indeed break out - despite a reduction in membership due to other commitments - the Club played an active role in the town's war efforts.

At its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1940 the members decided to launch a fund for the purchase of a Spitfire by the town and the surrounding district. On 20<sup>th</sup> September 1940 a public meeting supported by both the Urban and Rural District Councils was held to establish an organisation to raise the necessary £5,000, which was the cost of production of a Spitfire fighter aircraft. The fund was started with a donation of 100 guineas from the Directors of John Joule and Sons.

The project really caught the enthusiasm of the town and many of the organisations and schools held events to raise funds for it. The target was achieved by the end of the summer of 1941. The plane was named "Star of Stone" but it sadly crashed in 1942 killing the young Norwegian pilot.

The "Star of Stone" was perhaps the first major fund-raising project in which the Club has been involved over the years. For example, in 1964 led by President Geoff Leese, the Club purchased a mini bus for the Physically Handicapped Club, and the following year the Club - under President Albert Holmes - jointly raised funds with the Inner Wheel Club to purchase a van for the Meals on Wheels Service. As is often the case, family and Rotary were working together: the President of the Inner Wheel club that year was Albert's wife Ev.

As well as raising funds for community projects the Club over the years has acquired an excellent name for the work that it has undertaken (and continues to undertake) among the young people in the town. In the early days this work took the form of arranging career exhibitions and holding mock interviews. Today it involves young people taking part in "Youth Speaks" - a public speaking competition; Young Chef; Young Innovator, Young Enterprise - whereby a group of young people form a company and manufacture and sell products; the RYLA Camps, a week-long activity to help develop leadership skills, and Group Study Exchange - which arranges four-week visits by young professional people to another country to learn about how their profession is undertaken and practised there.

Another annual event is the Tom Wilson Essay Competition (named after a former Rotarian and well-known local journalist) where young people are asked to submit a piece of written work on a selected topical subject.

In 1977 the Club established a Rotaract Club in Stone. Rotaract clubs have similar aims as Rotary but are for young people from 18 to 30. The Club was extremely successful for a number of years and raised funds for projects both in Stone and

Also, in 1977 Rotary formed the Stone Probus Club that brings together retired business and professional people. This Club continues to thrive and celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2007.

In addition to its work in Stone, Rotary has over the years supported numerous projects overseas.

They have provided water pumps for villages in India; provided equipment for a clinic in Kuala Lumpur; refurbished tools to be sent to developing countries; raised funds to help eradicate polio throughout the world; supported camps where people can have eye operations and many others.

Recently we have purchased two kilns in memory of one of our former members, David Thornton, to enable a community in South Africa to make pottery and sell it to support their local economy. The project was first identified by one-time Stone councillor Sarah Williams, an honorary member of the Club and a Rotary Peace Scholar.

We are regularly supported in Rotary's Shelter Box appeals by other organisations in the town. These boxes are filled with a variety of items that are needed in the event of an emergency overseas. The boxes are stored at a central location and are one of the first forms of aid flown out to disaster areas throughout the world when the need arises.

Of course, all this work requires finance and over the years various fund-raising activities have been tried ranging from Tea Dances, Cheese & Wine evenings; Race Nights; Barn Dances (in a Barn!) through to more adventurous events such as a Ball in the food court at the Potteries Shopping Centre, an orchestral concert in the Victoria Hall Hanley and the Brass and Blues Concerts in Sandon Park.

The Club also collects for national charities including selling poppies at the Stone Motorway Service Area for the Royal British Legion and collecting in Christchurch Way for Children in Need.

In recent years the Club has become very closely involved in Stone Festival (along with the ATC, Lions, Inner Wheel, and Round Table Clubs)

Rotary Club members are enthusiastic, fun loving and active volunteers who give their time and talents to serve their communities, and the Rotary Club of Stone is no different. They hold regular social events and indeed in recent years the Club has 'twinned' with the Rotary Club of Offenbach-Dreieich with bi-annual visits to one another.

The Club was delighted to learn that their 75th anniversary was to be recognised by Stafford Borough Council with a special carpet bed floral display in the Town's Stonefield Park. It was unveiled in late July.

(Based on an article written by Rotarian Philip Leason on the occasion of the Clubs 70th Charter anniversary, updated to reflect developments in the next five years)