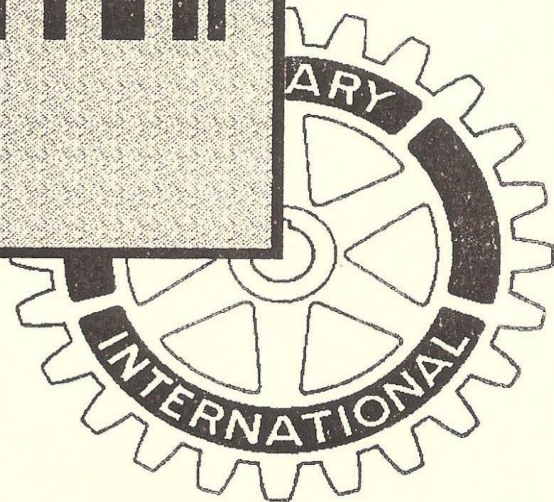


**THREE-QUARTER  
TIME**



# **The Rotary Club of Richmond (Surrey)**

*(Inaugurated 21st February, 1924)*

## **1974 - 1999**

**Compiled by  
Past President Paul A. Martin, P.H.F.**

## FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT

In this modern day and age, and in such a changing world, this addition to the history of the Rotary Club of Richmond (Surrey) offers a pleasant opportunity to reflect on what has gone before and to bring to mind many who have devoted themselves to Rotary International and the causes it supports.

The story of the last twenty-five years has been researched admirably by Past President Paul Martin. His account provides a splendid record of the Club's achievements over this period, adding so much to Rotarian Len McNae's 50th Anniversary record.

Is it possible that the Club has survived the reigns of three Kings and a Queen (who acceded to the throne forty-seven years ago), together with twenty changes of Prime Minister - from Ramsay McDonald to Tony Blair. Has time gone that fast? Have the years slipped away so easily?

When Rotary's founder, Paul Harris, passed away in 1947 (two years before Richmond's quarter century), there were 6,000 Clubs across the world. Five decades later, as this Club reaches the ripe old age of seventy-five, Rotary International has grown to more than 28,000 Clubs with over 1.2 million members. However they might have dreamed, the early Rotarians could never have imagined that we would now have electronic mail, be attending District 'IT Workshops' and look at Web pages to keep up to date with Rotary affairs all over the world.

May the Rotary Club of Richmond (Surrey) continue to flourish and grow as it moves towards its centenary. It gives me great pride to have been given the honour of being President during this auspicious Rotary year 1998-99.

**Peter Sowrey,**  
President.

# **PRESIDENTS 1974 - 1999**

P. C. Chiverton	...	...	...	...	...	...	1974-75
A. Woodward	...	...	...	...	...	...	1975-76
P. S. Savage	...	...	...	...	...	...	1976-77
E. R. Pilgrim	...	...	...	...	...	...	1977-78
L. I. Raven-Hill	...	...	...	...	...	...	1978-79
M L. Weston	...	...	...	...	...	...	1979-80
P. J, Simmonds	...	...	...	...	...	...	1980-81
B. H. Frith	...	...	...	...	...	...	1981-82
L. J. Thorley	...	...	...	...	...	...	1982-83
P. A. Martin	...	...	...	...	...	...	1983-84
R. J. W. Gale	...	...	...	...	...	...	1984-85
D. W. Simpson	...	...	...	...	...	...	1985-86
J. Plant	...	...	...	...	...	...	1986-87
C. Jo Amos	...	...	...	...	...	...	1987-88
R. H. Dowler	...	...	...	...	...	...	1988-89
R. A. Matthiae	...	...	...	...	...	...	1989-90
P. W. Saunders	...	...	...	...	...	...	1990-91
N. C. Bond	...	...	...	...	...	...	1991-92
N. Po M. Messenger	...	...	...	...	...	...	1992-93
M. L. Weston	...	...	...	...	...	...	1993-94
J. V. Legate	...	...	...	...	...	...	1994-96
C. J. Kenward	...	...	...	...	...	...	1996-98
P. Sowrey	...	...	...	...	...	...	1998-99

## **THE ROTARY CLUB OF RICHMOND (SURREY)**

**Club No. 159      District 1140**

Inaugurated 21st February, 1924

### **1974 – 1999**

*"Of course we do admire all you gentlemen for all your good work. Apart from that, when we have the pleasure of meeting, you always bring a lot of happiness with you."*

The grateful words on behalf of recipients of a donation from the Rotary Club of Richmond's Christmas collections in 1997, and prophetic, too. Margaret Burditt was writing for the members of the No.1 Branch of the Richmond Old Age Pensioners' Association who gather each weekday in Meadows Hall, Church Road.

In July 1998 the Hall was threatened with closure when Borough Councillors indicated that Richmond upon Thames Council was about to withdraw its financial support. It has been the only old people's day centre in central Richmond for thirty-five years and was established with the full co-operation of the Rotary Club. Past Club President Arthur Meadows was Mayor of Richmond in 1961 when a site became available behind a property in Sheen Road. The Club contributed nearly £1,000 towards the £5,000 raised by Mayor Meadows to augment funds already accumulated, and the Hall was named after him.

Over the years, the involvement of Richmond Rotarians and their wives continued. The late Rotarian Harry Langdon was for many years President of the No.1 O.A.P. Association, a position later taken by another member, Brian Frith, who ably led the response to the Borough Council's threat of closure in 1998, chairing a committee of local residents and Rotarians who devised funding to enable Meadows Hall to remain open for the immediate future.

Once again, as throughout the seventy-five years of its existence, the Rotary Club of Richmond (Surrey), was vigilant to the needs of its community and through the experience, knowledge, expertise and concern of its members, was able to demonstrate the motto of Rotary International - 'Service Above Self.

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## **SAY IT WITH FLOWERS**

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames marked the 50th Anniversary of the Club with a very special gesture. Each year an angled flower bed was laid out with a design depicting an aspect of life in the town. For 1974 it took the form of the Rotary International wheel with reference to the Richmond Club's Golden Jubilee. It was planned by Vice-President Arthur Woodward, Head of the Borough's Parks & Leisure Department. On 10th September the majority of the Club members assembled around the bed for a photo call by Rotarian John Dobson.

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## **THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

The 50th Anniversary of the Rotary Club of Richmond was a major landmark in the Club's history and was mentioned briefly in the Golden Jubilee booklet written by Rotarian Len McNae. The centre spread of the booklet served as the menu and toast list for the celebratory Dinner & Ball held at the Hurlingham Club on Wednesday, 29th May 1974.

"Memories of a happy summer evening at the Hurlingham Club will long remain with us," is how Peter Chiverton recorded the occasion in his first 'President's Page' in the Club bulletin, *The Richmond Rotarian*.

### **The Jubilee Project**

The Club's Golden Jubilee project involved turning a neglected piece of land on the slope adjacent to Northumberland House, between Petersham Road and the towpath, into a garden for the young, the old and the handicapped. The land was owned by the New Richmond Club Ltd. and was surplus to their requirements to develop flats and offices on the Northumberland House site.

John Mills, the architect member of the Club, was involved with the development and planned a number of features such as a garden for the blind, a children's play area and a Rotary 'wishing well'.

Originally envisaged as costing the Club around £5,000, the scheme soon became rather more ambitious and when it was launched at the Star & Garter Hotel (now 'The Petersham') on 8th May 1974, with the aid of an impressive model of the scheme, the fund-raising committee, chaired by Rotarian Brian Frith, set itself the target of finding £15,500, with the aim of opening the garden in 1975.

### **Fund-raising**

Numerous methods were used to accumulate contributions towards the scheme. Approaches to a number of local companies and organisations resulted in promises of several thousand pounds. A Morris Marina was raffled by the Weston family (Michael, Audrey and Russell) with tickets at £1 each, an empty shop in Hill Street was converted to sell bric-a-brac, art, plants and gifts, the Mayor toured the town's pubs in a pony cart, and donations were received from many individuals.

Rotarian George Edwards organised an excellent Charity Ball at the Richmond Hill Hotel on 25th October which raised £790 including £200 from a tombola arranged by Past President Alex Bunce and the ladies of the Inner Wheel Club of Richmond (the wives of Rotarians).

A few days before the Charity Ball Brian Frith received the following letter, showing what the scheme meant to one local resident:

*"Dear Mr. Brian,*

*For several years now, of course, the 'garden' which you are about to create with your wonderful efforts has - for most who might have wandered there - been a forbidding place of rotting trees, fallen branches, crumbling walls and steps, grass and shrubs 'gone mad'. But recently I walked there and heard again the sounds of revelry by night of a few years ago. In the trees were coloured lights; down those steps trod evening shoes; evening gowns passed over the mown grass. Those were the happy days of The Richmond Club - the special occasions such as the 'Ascot Ball' and the New Year's Eve celebrations (not the 'Eve of Waterloo').*

*On that recent day referred to above I knew as I stepped into the garden that I would immediately relive the past. As I walked I came upon a young man sitting in the long grass under a tree enjoying a bottle of beer and a pub sandwich. I felt prompted to stop and describe to him what it all used to be like. I did so and he listened intently. To my surprise he then said, 'I had no idea - it must have been a happy place'. I think it remains so and all those who will be made happy when they come to 'your garden' will, unrealised by them, be recreating the atmosphere of what was (and will be) a lovely meeting place.*

*JANET APLIN."*

Another Janet - Janet Dunbar, the noted broadcaster and author of many books including *A Prospect of Richmond* - wished to be associated with the project and devised 'Richmond Miscellany', a lively, intimate recollection of Richmond past in words and music, with the accent on gaiety. Two performances were given in Petersham Hall on 15th February 1975 but ticket sales were low, with only £41 being raised, a disappointing result for an excellent entertainment.

Whilst the original intention had been to raise the £15,500 towards the Riverside Garden before the end of 1974, the Rotary Shop was still trading well into 1975 thanks to a great deal of work by Brian Frith and his wife Inge, aided by members of Rotary, Inner Wheel and the new Rotaract club. But it became apparent that no work could be undertaken on the garden site until the whole development, including the new buildings alongside, had obtained planning permission.

## **Delays**

Like many similar schemes, getting the approval of the local authority proved a major stumbling block, ownership of the site changed and months of delay turned into years. The Club's Golden Jubilee project was renamed the Riverside Garden Project, with around £11,000 earning interest by September 1978, ready for the turning of the first

sod at the earliest possible date. Periods of pessimism were followed by optimism, delay by progress, but ultimately this proved to be 7th December 1981. Tree surgery was to be undertaken, the lawns were to be laid and planting was planned for spring/summer 1982.

Work progressed but the question of the final cost was of concern to the Club and the architects. It was with some relief that President Leslie Thorley reported in November a grant of £6,000 by the Richmond Parish Lands Charity which enabled the inclusion of some of the features of the garden which would otherwise have had to be omitted. Time marched on and the final planting of the borders by the Borough Recreation Officer's staff was postponed until autumn 1983.

One of the features of the garden was to have been a children's slide. No sooner had local children had the opportunity to try it out than a resident in one of the properties in Petersham Road backing onto the garden complained very vociferously to the local Council that the slide had not been included in the original planning and that use (and abuse) of the slide was causing her annoyance. The one feature designed to amuse youngsters in the scaled-down project had to be removed. It was now late 1985.

### **Fourteen Years On**

The Riverside Garden was finally dedicated by the Mayor, Councillor David Cornwall on a bleak 5th November afternoon in 1986. He unveiled a plaque (which was soon vandalised) and planted a tree. The Mayor was well aware of the problems which had beset the project. In formally accepting the Garden into the Council's care he probably detected the look of relief on many faces around him.

In the December edition of the Club bulletin President Julian Plant had to defend the Rotary Garden from criticism in the local press and wrote, "The Club can be proud of the effort that has been put in to making a derelict eyesore a place that is now an asset to the town. Do not let a journalist's outpourings detract from the achievement of many years' hard work by so many people."

After more than fourteen years, the Golden Jubilee project had been completed. Why then does one read in the June 1992 bulletin: "At last we have received a bill for the Rotary Garden"? The ultimate contractor on the Northumberland House site had gone out of business and for some considerable time the Receiver was not aware that the Rotary Club was due to pay for the work carried out on the garden.

In due course, the account was settled and the Riverside Garden passed into the ownership of the Borough Council. Many members of the Club had been involved in the project but one Rotarian will always be recalled for his dogged determination to see it through. Denys Simpson was President in the Club's Jubilee year. He took it upon himself to chair the Garden Committee after the initial fund-raising period had ended and was able to lead all the intricate negotiations up to and beyond the dedication by the Mayor. With his wife Vi, he moved to Findon in Sussex in April 1991, resigning after twenty-eight years of membership. Never has the Honorary Membership awarded to him soon afterwards been more deserved.

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## **THE HOUSE AT POOH CORNER**

For forty years Richmond Rotary has, with only one or two exceptions, enjoyed annual visits to four acres of delightful Surrey countryside, originally the property of the late Past President Calvert Smith, on which he had built a summer retreat, 'The House at Pooh Corner'.

Ownership of the property passed to Calvert's daughter Phyllis, wife of Past President Jack Coates and a few years ago it was taken over by their daughter and son-in-law Pru and Andy Hewett who live there permanently, but the visits continue. On a summer Sunday each year members, families and friends meet at a pub just south of Shere village then undertake the tricky task of negotiating two miles of ever-narrowing roads to reach 'Pooh Corner' itself, hidden away down an unsurfaced lane at Farley Green.

Once arrived, and given fine weather, there could be no better spot for a picnic followed by a siesta or a little gentle exercise - tennis, cricket, etc., or a short ramble along the surrounding tracks. Afternoon tea and the occasional evening barbecue complete a relaxing day of fellowship - a cornerstone of Rotary.

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## **VENUES**

During the post-war years the Club had held its luncheon meetings at the Cadena Café at the top of Brewers Lane then at the Castle Hotel in Whittaker Avenue. Both establishments have since disappeared.

In 1973 Vice-President Peter Chiverton and House Committee Chairman Bill Barton were given the unenviable task of seeking an alternative to the Castle and considerable feeling was roused when a move to the Richmond Hill Hotel was proposed. At this time most of the members were active in business in the town centre and the new venue meant a previously unnecessary uphill walk or car journey. There was an inevitable increase in the cost of luncheon as well and two members actually resigned when the move was agreed.

At least the Richmond Hill did have a sizeable car park for those that needed it and the facilities enjoyed in its banqueting rooms were the envy of many other Rotary Clubs. The permanency of the new venue was marked early in 1975 by a plaque at the Ballroom entrance noting the time and day of Richmond Rotary Club meetings. The sign was generously provided by Rotarian Jack Chester, holder of the 'Engraving' classification, who over the years also provided each new member with an identity badge to be worn at meetings and, when the old style badges needed replacement, prepared a complete new set, all at no charge to the Club.

In due course the hotel was sold by its owners, the Leiserach family, and, with its next door neighbour, the Richmond Gate Hotel, became the property of London Hotels Ltd., a subsidiary of the Securicor Group. The Club's facilities remained the same, though each year's increase in the cost of meals, and prices charged at the bar, gave rise to endless debate. The Club had no part in choosing its menus and the frequent appearance of the same entrée or dessert gave cause for dissatisfaction. One of the



benefits, however, was that being within a busy hotel catering for its residents and other groups, the Club was only required to specify its dining numbers on special occasions (visits by other Clubs, family luncheons or evening meetings with ladies).

### **Involvement**

In July 1981 Nigel Messenger, General Manager of the hotels for the previous three and a half years, joined the Rotary Club. Despite major commitments concerning alterations and improvements to the two hotels, Nigel was fully involved in Rotary life, serving as Chairman of the organising committee of the District Conference in 1989 and Club President in 1992-93.

His company supported and encouraged the charitable activities of its staff and backed Rotarian Messenger's support for 'Reach for a Dream', a project based in South Africa to grant the wishes of terminally ill and handicapped children. On several occasions children whose wish had been to come to England were accommodated with their family at the hotel and were entertained by Club members, visiting the sites of London, Wimbledon tennis, etc., subject to the limitations of their disabilities. One of the children was taken to 10 Downing Street where she was personally shown round by Prime Minister John Major. During his Presidential year, Nigel was able to return the compliment by making Mr. Major an Honorary Member of the Club.

'Reach for a Dream' was able to reciprocate the hospitality provided by the hotel and Rotary when the Club raised funds to send Gareth Savin, a young Richmond player permanently totally disabled in a rugby game. The reputation of the Springboks made the possibility of a visit to South Africa irresistible for Gareth who enjoyed a very hectic three weeks there despite being wheelchair bound.

Following total refurbishment of the Mansfield Bar in September 1988, an elegant replacement for the Club Presidents' Roll of Honour' was displayed prominently therein, A further benefit to the Club was the provision of rooms for Council and Committee meetings which had previously been held in the offices of Club members, especially for many years at 8 The Green, thanks to Past President Jack Coates, and later in Rotarian Chris Amos' office at the Britannia Building Society.

The Richmond Club continued to meet weekly at the Richmond Hill Hotel although there was a growing number of complaints from members about the costs of drinking and dining, and the difficulty of finding space in the busy car park. From time to time alternative headquarters had been sought but nowhere in the area appeared to be able to accommodate the Club's requirements for meetings every week with varying attendances.

### **A Move To Twickenham**

Towards the end of 1995 the hotel notified the Rotary Club that redecoration of the Ballroom would mean that it could not cater for Club luncheons for the first two months of 1996, though Council and Committee meetings would be unaffected. The House Committee was faced with having to find a new lunch time venue, if only for this short period. As previously mentioned, nowhere suitable could be found in Richmond itself,

but the Masonic Centre at Cole Court, London Road, Twickenham indicated that it could provide a temporary home, particularly as its facilities were normally unused until later in the day.

The first three-course luncheon at Cole Court on 9th January 1996 attracted a good attendance. President John Legate recorded: "The staff certainly seem to have gone out of their way to make us feel warmly welcome, as well as extremely well fed!"

The only members who may have grumbled about the cost of lunches at Cole Court (initially £10.00) were those who missed them and failed to apologise in advance. Unlike at the Richmond Hill Hotel, House Committee chairman P.P. Michael Weston has to provide Cole Court with a number to cater for by noon on the Monday before the meeting. If a meal is ordered, the Rotarian is expected to pay for it!

Good food, fellowship and numbers continued through January and February, leading the Club to decide that Cole Court should be adopted as the new headquarters. With the exception of closures during August and over the Christ-mas period, the Club has continued to meet there each week.

### **‘Gatherings’**

The August closures in 1996 and 1997 were compensated for by a number of ‘raids’ on other Rotary Clubs and the Richmond Probus Club. In addition there were enjoyable ‘gatherings’ on Tuesday lunch times at the Rose of York in Peter-sham Road, Richmond, a hostelry managed by Rotarian Bob Govis and his wife Jackie.

Following the move from the Richmond Hill Hotel, Bob had provided the Club with space for Council and Committee meetings. An area was curtained off to provide a reasonable amount of privacy and later this corner of the bar was decorated with a display of Rotary bannerettes and a smartly sign-written notice detailing the regular time and venue of Richmond Rotary Club meetings.

In 1998 the excellent facilities at the Barnes Home Guard Association's clubroom in East Sheen became known when Rotarian Chris Kenward arranged for a Club social function to be held at there, Rotarian David Bond already being a member. Shortly afterwards, and in glorious weather, the August ‘gatherings’ were held on the clubroom patio with suitable catering arranged by a number of Club members. Subsequently several Rotarians have joined the Association and all the Council and Committee meetings are now held there.

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### **THE ROTARACT CLUB OF RICHMOND**



Lucien Raven-Hill, well known in Kew as a legal executive and already much involved in local activities, became a Richmond Rotarian in 1973. More recognised by his nickname Tod, he soon became immersed in Community Service which led him to explore the possibility of forming a Rotaract club in Richmond.

A Rotaract club is a Rotary-sponsored service club for young men and women aged 18 to 30 (originally 28). The clubs can be either community- or university-based. In addition to undertaking projects to assist their local communities and to advance international understanding, Rotaractors also engage in activities related to professional development and leadership training.

In the early seventies Rotary District 114 comprised around eighty Clubs and extended from the Thames to the south coast. Derek Nicholls of the Burgess Hill Club had responsibility for Rotaract and was busily establishing the movement throughout the District. He addressed a meeting of Richmond Rotarians in September 1974 and Tod, having already convinced the Club that Rotaract (or Rotaract as it was so often misspelled) could succeed in Richmond, set about collecting the names and addresses of potential members.

On 20th January 1975 and the next two Mondays it was incredible to witness Rotarian Nicholls conduct an 'interest' meeting the first week, a 'formation' meeting at which a committee was created the next, and the first meeting of the interim Rotaract Club of Richmond on the third Monday. His inspiration and organisation were astonishing and got the club off to a great start.

The infant club was soon well on its way, meeting twice a month in the Sun Inn, Parkshot. Within weeks they were recruiting more members, involving themselves in community and Rotary activities, enjoying each other's company and that of Rotaractors from other clubs. Together with the ladies of Inner Wheel, they provided additional staff for the Rotary Club's Golden Jubilee project shop,

### **Chartering**

A splendid 'black tie' Charter Night was held at the Richmond Athletic Ground on 3rd October 1975, attended by Rotarians, Rotaractors, their families and friends. Rotary President Arthur Woodward presented the Charter and the following officers were appointed: President - Andrew Burrows, Vice-President Lance Parker, Treasurer - Jacqueline Ranby, Secretary Aline Wooton, Community Service Chairman - Cheryl Cooper, Vocational Service Chairman and Speakers' Secretary - Jenny Helme, International Service Chairman - Christine Howard, and Fellowship, Sports & Social Secretary - Anne Burrows.

From the very start, the Rotary Club had a commitment to always be represented at Rotaract meetings - not to organise or influence but to be a source of guidance and support if needed. Members of the Rotaract committee were frequent attenders but a rota was established which enabled the majority of Rotarians to witness the young people's enthusiasm and eagerness to serve. This was an important part of the Rotary Club's duty to its Rotaract club and was appreciated by Rotaractors to the extent that they opposed moves to make the attendance voluntary rather than obligatory.

Rotaract fitted in well with Rotary and involved itself with many of its parent Club's activities. Their own calendar was hectic, every Rotaract club in the District reliant upon the other clubs to support any event they organised. Sport gave them other opportunities to get together and the Richmond club organised an eight-a-side football competition for some years. One original event was a 'Highland Gathering' held on Old

Deer Park in October 1992 which saw 'Laird' Raven-Hill, resplendent in kilt and bonnet, officiating over tests of skill and strength such as Tossing the Caber and Hurling the Haggis, much to the amusement of the Deputy Mayor, Bob King.

Rotaract's major problem in most of its clubs was, and remains, the 'volatility' of its membership. Recruiting drives would boost numbers (35 were recorded in Richmond in December 1983) only to find that changes in career, studies or other interests would erode them until another effort to attract new blood became necessary. The age of the members was another factor - when several had to resign on reaching the upper limit, the loss of experience was hard to replace.

However the Richmond club was in good heart when it celebrated its 10th Anniversary in June 1985 at the Cardinal Wolsey Hotel, Hampton Court. Combined with Margaret Froude's President's Evening, it was an opportunity for the previous ten Presidents to return to the club and celebrate its, and their, achievements.

Ups and downs continued until 1989 when the club lost its meeting place. Numbers were so low that those who remained decided that it would inevitably have to close. Almost immediately Tod Raven-Hill took up the challenge to revive 'his' club but it was February 1992 before the second series of inaugural meetings could be arranged.

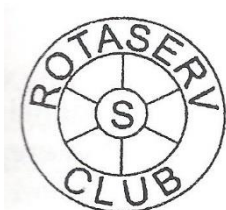
The Re-Chartering Night was arranged for 29th September at the Richmond Hill Hotel with an attendance of eighty including the Mayor, the Rotary District Governor and the Rotaract District Chairman. The new officers were inducted with due ceremony but the highlight of the evening was the deserved and long-overdue award by the Rotary Club of its highest award, a Paul Harris Fellowship, to Tod Raven-Hill, M.B.E.

The revived Rotaract club got off to a flying start, the 'Highland Gathering' the following month being a good example. Discos were organised and the club was quite active in all aspects of District life for several years. But it was once again becoming harder to find members prepared to take office and those that were leading the club ultimately became disillusioned - the excitement had somehow gone. In any case, love was getting it the way! Within a matter of months, three weddings occurred within the club which made headlines in the local press but which did little to help the future of Rotaract in Richmond. The few stalwarts remained, but in the end they were not prepared to work to keep the club alive and the Rotaract Club of Richmond went into cold storage again at the end of 1997.

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## **THE ROTASERV CLUB**

### **OF RICHMOND & KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES**



The problems of Rotaract had a lot to do with age and the situations of its members. Some clubs had allowed their members to remain involved beyond the age of 30, others had developed unofficial 'Orbit' clubs for 'past-Rotaractors' to enable them to retain their links.

The Richmond Rotary Club has always had officers who have striven to uphold the rules of Rotary and its associated organisations, so it is surprising to record its formation and support of a club for the 29-40 age group which at the time was not recognised by Rotary International. Even more surprising when the main protagonist in the Rotary Club has twice served as its Hon. Secretary and twice formed a Rotaract Club - no less a person than P.P. Tod Raven Hill, M.B.E., P.H.F.!

There were only five Rotaserv clubs (three in District 1140) when Tod entered into discussions with Chris Bilson, his opposite number in the Kingston-upon-Thames Club, to consider the joint sponsorship of such a club to serve both Rotary territories. The idea was well received and with the help of the Rotaract clubs of Richmond, Kingston, Barnes and Twickenham, some 100 invitations were sent out to former Rotaractors and others they knew in the 29 to 40 age group. This resulted in an attendance of 25 at an interest meeting on 12th September 1994.

The inaugural meeting of the interim Rotasery Club of Richmond & Kingston-upon-Thames was held at the Hotel Antoinette, Kingston on 23rd January 1995 and regular meetings commenced at the Rose of York, Richmond with an initial membership of fifteen. Four ladies became officers: President - Alison Webb, Vice-President - Jill Raine, Treasurer - Maria Parkinson, and Secretary - Susan Raine.

Right from the start the club was conducted in a very businesslike manner, precise minutes and newsletters keeping members informed of service and social activities. They won the 'Best Dressed Clowns' prize at the Kingston Rotaract May Merrie Pram Push and organised regular eating nights at local restaurants with guest speakers. Ten pin bowling was popular with the members and they participated in a day of conservation work and raised funds at a car boot sale.

All this was before the Chartering of the club which took place at Richmond Golf Club on 3rd June. The Presidents of the two sponsoring Rotary Clubs presented the Charter and the President's jewel, the officers were installed and the other members inducted.

The twice-monthly meetings continued in a number of venues in Richmond, Twickenham and Kingston until the first gathering at the current venue, the Waggon & Horses in Surbiton, in January 1998. Unlike Rotaract there is no commitment upon the sponsoring Rotary Clubs to be represented at Rotaserv meetings, but the two liaison officers make a point of being present at least once a month to maintain close contact; they encourage other Rotarians to join them.

The Richmond & Kingston Rotaserv Club has continued to make steady progress. A number of fund-raising activities have enabled donations to be made to several charities and practical assistance has been provided, particularly at the Teddington Memorial Hospital. Its most recent project involved the renovation of a quantity of surplus computer equipment provided by the employer of one of the members for reuse by youth groups, schools and local charities.

### **Rotary International Recognition**

Following a great deal of 'behind the scenes lobbying', Rotary International announced in 1998 that 'it continues to encourage Rotary Clubs to adopt Rotasery as a Club and District service project'. RI Director Tony Moore was now confident that if Rotaserv

continued to expand rapidly (it had grown to more than twenty clubs), was seen to keep young adults in the Rotary family and continued to give a steady stream of members to Rotary (the Richmond Club had already recruited one Rotaserver as a Rotarian), it would become a full programme of Rotary International like Rotaract.

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### **THE FOREIGN STUDENT PROGRAMME**

International Service Committee chairman Brian Frith introduced his plan for entertaining young visitors from abroad at the Club Assembly in July 1974. This annual meeting provides members with the opportunity to consider each Service Committee's proposals for the coming year, occasionally to call for amendments but usually to approve them. By giving this approval, it is beholden upon the membership to support the Committees' activities in the coming months.

The International Committee comprised some of the Club's most energetic members and all made a contribution, spurred on by their chairman's enthusiasm. Each was allocated responsibility for one aspect of the Club's international involvement, much of it well established over the years: support for the Ranfurly Library (now Book Aid International), our French 'contact' Club, filling another disaster box (to be sent out to an emergency site for use by a family), continuing assistance for Mrs. Woincew (a widowed deportee from Russia living in Hamburg), the arranging of international speakers for Club meetings, etc.

In addition to overseeing this wide range of activities, Brian himself took charge of his new project - the foreign student programme, which was to continue for a number of years. Richmond, being a reasonably affluent town, was a focal point for au pairs and students anxious to improve their English. The Richmond Adult College organised a number of 'English for Foreigners' courses, some of which were run by the wife of the Rural Dean of Kew, Mrs. Pronger, and her daughter Rosemary Kindley.

Personal contacts with these two ladies going back to Brian's days in Richmond Round Table enabled him to arrange for them to select a group of a dozen or so of the students to be offered the opportunity of joining Rotarians on a number of occasions during their year at the College. Over the months groups would be invited to attend social functions (eating nights, barbecues, parties, safari lunches, ladies evenings, etc.) as guests of the Club. Most of the students had very limited resources and this enabled them to enjoy their stay in England a little more. They were also encouraged to assist with Community Service activities such as Christ-mas collections and the Richmond May Fair. Coming from countries all over the world, one of their number could often be found to translate correspondence to and from other Rotary Clubs.

One of the very special occasions for the students was a December day out in a Kent forest cutting down Christmas trees including the big one erected each year in Lower George Street, Richmond. This was through the generosity of Rotarian Neil Burgess whose mother also provided a warming lunch in her country cottage. A number of

Rotarians invited the students into their homes, especially over the Christmas holidays if they were still in this country.

Frith's pharmacy and photographic dealership was situated in the centre of Richmond and became a home-from-home for many of the students, knowing that if they had a problem, or wanted a friendly chat, Brian would be there to help. The friendships which were made by Brian and other Rotarians through this project have been maintained. Many letters and greetings are exchanged each year, some over twenty-five years, with Richmond students who have gone on to exciting careers or parenthood, all remembering their experiences with the Rotary Club of Richmond with great affection. So successful was the programme that several of the employers of the au pairs would 'lobby' Mrs. Pronger or Mrs. Kindley to ensure that their au pair was included!

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### **BOWLING THE O.A.P.s OVER**

The origins of the event seem lost in the annals of Richmond Rotary, but in almost every one of the twenty-five years currently under review the No.1 Old Age Pensioners Association Bowls Club have challenged Rotarians to a Lawn Bowls match - and won every time!

The Raven-Hill Trophy for the competition makes very boring reading, listing as it does the same victorious team year after year! The matches themselves have been far from boring, however. They are, in fact, tremendous fun, played on greens specially created for the O.A.P.s behind the Swimming Baths in Old Deer Park. Council economies have meant that the turf is not as even or fully covered as one would expect to find on a first class rink. This causes woods to behave with totally unpredictable results - even the one or two Rotarians who regularly bowl are totally bemused.

This is probably the O.A.P.s secret weapon. They play daily in the summer and by the time the match is played, late in the season, can use every groove, hump and dip to full advantage. It matters not that Rotary loses with such predictability. Everyone thoroughly enjoys the afternoons which generally attract excellent weather. And at 'half-time' the teams retire to the pavilion for tea and sandwiches provided in alternate years by the O.A.P.s or the ladies of the Inner Wheel. The importance that the hosts put upon the fixture is such that they use it as an opportunity to present the awards for their own competitions. Long may it continue, and, who knows, one year Rotary might win!

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### **THE SPORTING WORLD**

District 1140 (previously 114) promotes a wide range of sporting competitions amongst Rotarians in its Clubs among which are golf, darts, snooker, sailing, badminton, tennis, dominoes, table tennis, ten pin bowling and bridge. Over the years the Richmond Club has entered for most of them with varying degrees of success, but rarely ultimate victory.

Before the District divided in 1982 the early rounds of the competitions were zoned to avoid the necessity to travel long distances. Those who won were likely to find lengthier journeys to subsequent matches which may have served as a disincentive.

This need not concern us unless you are one of those for whom the winning is all. The main benefit is the fellowship the matches engender. None of the games can take place in silence and the opportunities for refreshment and conversation afterwards make each a worthwhile occasion. And if you've lost the actual match, there may still be a chance to win something for charity - far more satisfying!

### **Local Competition**

Various sporting activities involve the five (six, including Barnes until 1994) Rotary Clubs within the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames - Richmond, Teddington & The Hamptons, Twickenham, Twickenham-upon-Thames (formed in 1978) and Kew Gardens (formed in 1984).

Probably the oldest fixture is the golf match with the Twickenham Club for the Arantee Cup (R. and T.). The Rotarian golfers of the whole Borough are united in the Richmond upon Thames Rotary Golfing Society and compete annually for the Dimbleby Cup for the best team and the Robert Kempthorne Cup for the best pair.

In July 1987 the six Clubs were divided by the Thames into 'Middlesex' and 'Surrey' and entered into friendly conflict on the cricket pitch at St. Paul's School in Barnes. Richmond President Chris Amos captained 'Surrey' to a famous victory, with Rotarians Graham Locke and Nigel Messenger assisted by representatives of Barnes and Kew Gardens. A splendid barbecue was served after the match by 'Mr. Shene' (Rotarian All Redjeb). The match became an annual fixture, moving in 1991 to the Old Hamptonian's sports ground in Hampton.

Hardly sport, but two indoor events involve all the Borough Clubs in annual competition. The name of the Richmond Club appears twice (1986 and 1997) on the Geoffrey Rickard Trophy which is competed for at the Twickenham-upon-Thames Club's Games Night. Following a normal Rotary dinner, the games include darts, dominoes, snooker, shove ha'penny, mini-golf and bagatelle.

Michael Pooley of the Barnes Club began their 'Fellowship' Quiz in 1986 at Watney's Sports Club in Mortlake. Up to 1993 the Quiz took place in the elegant surroundings of the Roehampton Club. Following the closure of the Barnes Rotary Club on 30th June 1994, Past President Michael was one of ten members who were welcomed into Richmond. The 'Five Clubs Quiz', as it had now become, took place on 25th October at the Richmond Hill Hotel. Although he has since moved to the Rotary Club of Henley Bridge, a mile or two from his Oxfordshire home, Michael and his wife still arrange the Quiz which has taken place for the past two years at the Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club.

### **Intra-Club Pursuits**

In 1975 Rotarians Tom Dick and Harry Langdon were appointed President and Captain of the 'Intercogs' Rotary Golfing Society which draws its membership from individual golfers in District Clubs. As the doyens of the Richmond Rotary golfing scene, it was



appropriate, as well as an excellent play on their names, that their memories should have been marked by the Tom Dick and Harry Trophy which has been competed for each year since 1986 by the Club's golfers. The cup, of uncertain vintage, was provided by Past President Arthur Woodward and Tom and Harry paid £10 each to have it silvered. Appropriately, the winner for the past three years has been Arthur who feels, not surprisingly, that he should be able to claim the Trophy as his own!

The Intra-Club Darts Competition began in February 1980 when fourteen pairs of Rotarians vied for the Rose Bowl trophies named after their donor, President Michael Weston. The venue was the Royal British Legion Remembrance Club in Petersham Road and the winners of the first year's event were Past President Geoff Dean and Rotarian Robert Dowler. In recent years the competition has been expanded in one sense, by the inclusion of a ladies event for a pair of 'Egg Cups', but contracted by the diminishing number of members who compete.

It was President Chris Kenward who came up with the idea for the 'Great Conker Contest' based (loosely) on the rules of the World Conker Championships. On 21st October 1996 the other four Rotary Clubs, Rotaract, Rotasery and Round Table were invited to compete for conker necklaces and certificates at the Rose of York.

Two Rotary Ambassadorial Scholars from abroad took part, no doubt sharing the bewilderment of two Canadians who were told by Past District Governor Brian Frith that they were witnessing an old English fertility custom! Perhaps this explained how Brian became 'King of the Conkers!' The evening made a profit of £108 which was divided between Strathmore School and the Holly Lodge Centre, Richmond Park. The Conker Contest has now established a place in the Club calendar and the ladies prize in 1998 was nearly won by Shiho Yanagihara from Japan, another Ambassadorial Scholar, but ultimately went to Gladys Chubb of the Inner Wheel Club.

### **Personal Endeavour**

In 1997 Rotarian Heikki Koskimies, Richmond's 'flying Finn', travelled to the United States at his own expense to take part in the New York Marathon. He completed the course in just 4 hours 27 minutes and in so doing raised over £2,000 for Tadworth Court Children's Hospital which was the Immediate Past District Governor Malcolm Dennett's special charity for his year of office.

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### **LIFEMANSHIP AT LUNCH, 1977**

The call for volunteers to transport residents from an old people's home to the local television studios brought the Rotarian Funeral Director to his feet.

"I can get them there, but I can't bring them back."

In the respectful silence which followed, a Past President rejoined, "But you never do!"

## **CLOSURES**

Richmond's daughter Rotary Club of Barnes, formed in 1929, took the sad decision to close in 1994 due to the advancing age of an ever-reducing number of members who were unable to attract new blood. Some members decided to withdraw from Rotary but ten, most of them Past Presidents and none with less than ten years experience, were welcomed into the Richmond Club.

For similar reasons the Isleworth Club closed in 1998 after meeting for many years at the Jolly Gardeners in Twickenham Road, less than a mile from Cole Court. Five Senior Active Past Presidents came to Richmond, invited by another former Isleworth member who had joined the previous year, having been out of Rotary for a brief period.

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## **THE VARSITY MATCH**

For three years from 1993 to 1995 the Club decided to hold its meeting on the second Tuesday in December at breakfast time in the Richmond Hill Hotel. This is the traditional date of the Oxford v. Cambridge Rugby match at Twickenham which had always attracted a number of members away from lunch on that day, most joining a party whose day's entertainment was prearranged for an all-in price which included a donation to charity, latterly the Princess Alice Hospice.

The 1996 move to Cole Court, about half a mile from the R.F.U. ground and with ample free parking facilities, enabled the Club to reinstate an early lunch and invite the match party to join them. In 1998 the party was 59 strong and, with the addition of raffles and other money-raising schemes, they contributed £860 to Hospice funds.

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## **'THE RICHMOND ROTARIAN'**

Ted Herbert, the scourge of all things unhealthy or unsafe in Richmond, joined the Rotary Club in 1962. In September 1965 President Geoff Otton introduced the first of the bulletins Ted had "so gallantly volunteered to produce". He appears to have 'Tedited' an unbroken run of issues (including, apparently, his year as President in 1969-70) when the Club celebrated its 50th Anniversary and continued until January 1981, shortly after which he and Isabel moved to 'Soft Verges', Alton.

The writer was Hon. Secretary at the time of Ted's resignation and wrote a tribute to him, part of which is reproduced here:

"There must be few Richmond Rotarians who can remember a time when Ted Herbert wasn't editor of our bulletin. Whilst not wishing to cast any aspersions on other editors, the only reason I can think of for anyone remembering would be that something was missing from the Club. Whilst it is only right and proper that Ted's contribution to the morale of the Club should be acknowledged, none of us needs to be reminded of his humour and editorial style. Like any journalist, he would argue

that he was a mere recorder of the mood of the events he described; but there is no doubt that much of the tremendous fellowship we enjoy has been generated through Ted's editorial typewriter .....Ted has set a standard which future editors will find hard to emulate."

In the following July Ted was invited to accept Honorary Membership as the Club's way of thanking him for his tremendous contribution to its life over fifteen and a half years in the editorial chair.

The Club's professional journalist (and author of the Golden Jubilee history), Len McNae, nobly stepped into the breach until the new Rotary year began when President Brian Frith appointed Robert Dowler to be editor. He retained the position for three years, keeping to the format which Ted Herbert had created but adding his own brand of humour and gentle questioning about where the Club was going.

Having completed his year as President in June 1984, Paul Martin began a three year period as editor by changing the format from half-foolscap to A5. When Nigel Messenger took over in 1987 his first two editions were in A4 size then reverted to the smaller size from October. Nigel will be remembered for his quizzes, which he claimed attracted many entries but which only ever seemed to be won by his predecessor Ted Herbert! It was normal practice for Nigel to forget to give the answers to the previous month's questions and even when he did remember, there were some he did not know, either!

Modern technology was beginning to rear its head at this time. Nigel had access to a fairly rudimentary word processor (named Mavis) and when, two years later, Past President Peter Simmonds took over the reins, his more sophisticated computer could produce a more stylish result but, for some reason, could rarely make it look the same for two editions in succession! This amusement at the expense of editors Messenger and Simmonds should not be taken to mean that their bulletins were lacking in newsworthiness or readability. Far from it. They were published regularly, and in the best traditions of The Richmond Rotarian, were as accurate as the editor failed to make them!

### **New Technology**

Past President Paul Martin returned as editor in July 1992 and remains so to the present. To keep the cost of production out of subscription calculations, members were asked in 1993 to offer copying facilities for an individual edition. Recently, members who do not have copying facilities were requested to cover the cost of the paper for an issue and an excellent response was received, The copier or donor receives an acknowledgement in their edition. Paul's wife purchased a Canon Starwriter in 1995 which enabled him to produce a much more legible format and toward the end of 1996 he put his own computer into use. A year later the bulletin was enlarged to A4 as tried by Nigel Messenger ten years previously. The new technology makes it possible to produce columns, tables, charts, etc. and to include the occasional photograph. All this sounds great but as Ted Herbert knew well, the editor of The Richmond Rotarian relies on members to keep him supplied with information and articles for publication. It's not a one man job - well that's a good enough excuse when the usual crop of mistakes is spotted!

## **THE FRENCH CONTACT CLUB**

The series of friendly exchanges with the Rotary Club of La Chatre en Bas Berry in central France had begun in 1967 and continued until 1982. A party of eight Rotarians and four wives took a 29-seater coach via Le Havre in September 1977 and, despite language difficulties, the 'entente cordiale' was preserved and marvellous hospitality enjoyed.

Their return visit at the end of April 1979 involved visits to Hampton Court Palace and London stores, but had its share of problems. The French Rotarians flew into Heathrow at 10.30 p.m. on Friday night, some three hours late, which curtailed the first evening's entertainment. Coinciding with their visit was Tod Raven-Hill's Presidents Night at the Tiltyard Restaurant, Hampton Court. At the end of the evening a valuable fur coat was missing from the cloakroom. Despite frantic efforts over the next two days, it was not located and the police insisted on 'eliminating the visitors from their enquiries' by searching their luggage before they left Heathrow on Tuesday morning. It eventually transpired that a lady guest from Richmond had taken the coat by mistake, but it was a great embarrassment for all concerned.

Richmond was again invited to France in autumn 1982, a party of fifteen travelling in four cars. "It was a very enjoyable trip with good fellowship, superb hospitality and diverse activities," was how The Richmond Rotarian recorded the weekend.

A number of attempts were made to welcome the French Rotarians back to England and funds were accumulated to cover the cost of their entertainment. But for whatever reason, no date was ever finalised and the contact lapsed. Could the unfortunate search back in 1979 have left unhappy memories? The £500 still in Club funds in November 1989 was finally donated to the British Disabled Water Ski Association towards the purchase of a new boat at their centre at Wraysbury.

In 1982 Rotarian Don Spragg visited the Rotary Club of St. Maixent L'Ecole near Nantes in the Muscadet wine area. The Club intended to send two or three local children to England as the prize in a competition in their local schools, and hoped to find an English Club to accommodate them. Immediate Past President Nick Bond was made welcome when he stopped off at St. Maixent during his summer holiday and a Club visit was discussed. Sadly, Richmond Club members were not eager to establish another contact club and no further progress was made.

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## **FIFTY YEARS A ROTARIAN**

"A unique occasion" was President Brian Frith's description when the Club gathered on 8th September 1981 to honour the last surviving Founder Member -Past President and Honorary Member Hyman A. Leon. The honour took the form of a Certificate from Rotary International marking Hymie's membership of the Club for more than fifty years, believed to be only the fourth such award presented to date in this country.

Hymie 'passed to higher service' the following July and Past President Arthur Woodward paid tribute to him in the bulletin:

"Many distinctions and achievements can be listed, serving as Mayor of Richmond on three occasions, becoming a Freeman and the only Honorary Alderman, founding and serving organisations including the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Richmond Philanthropic Society, the Star & Garter Home, the Royal British Legion, and Richmond Magistrates' Bench. He was awarded the O.B.E. for his service to others. To me, above all, he was a man of deep and sincere feeling ready at all times to give encouragement and help, serving as a fine example for others to follow."

The example of Hymie Leon's service to the community has been followed by his daughter, Mrs. Annette Waldman, chairman of Richmond Arthritis Care, whose service was recognised with a Paul Harris Fellowship on 10th June 1997.

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### **GOOD CITIZENS**

The recipients of the 1985 'Good Citizens of Richmond' awards, sponsored by the Richmond Hill Hotel and the Richmond & Twickenham Times, were Rotarian Leonard McNae and his wife Freda.

"The McNaes have done so much, so well, so long," was how the Mayor described their contributions to Richmond life. Len was a Labour councillor from 1957 to 1960 and Freda succeeded him, serving as Deputy Mayor with Len as her Consort. After his retirement from the Press Association, Len became secretary of the Philanthropic Society and a Trustee of the Richmond Parish Lands Charity. He also served as secretary of the Sudbrook Lodge and was made an honorary member of the National Union of Journalists.

Freda was a magistrate for many years, led the Friends of the Royal Hospital, Richmond through many years of turmoil and change, remains an active member of the Inner Wheel Club of Richmond and was made a Paul Harris Fellow in 1997.

Len's membership had an unusual twist. He joined as an Honorary Member in 1968 but chose to apply for ordinary membership in 1973. He compiled the 50th Anniversary history and served on the Club Service Committee mainly as P.R.O., and at Community Service meetings he could always be relied upon to know where help was available, when it was needed and whether it should be given. Len's health sadly declined and his Honorary Membership was restored. He died on 1st January 1996, survived by Freda, three children and four grandchildren.

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### **A SAD MONTH**

September 1986 was a very sad month for Richmond Rotary and Inner Wheel with the passing within days of two individuals who had done much more than their fair share towards the achievement of the organisations' aims.

Past President Arthur Bishop, P.H.F. survived to the age of 93. He had seen service in the First World War and made his career in the Ministry of Labour, managing the Labour Exchange in Richmond by the time he retired in 1953. A Freemason since 1925, Arthur became a Rotarian in 1947, served on the District International Service Committee with three years as its Youth Exchange Officer, was Club Secretary before his Presidential year in 1954, then went on to compete another twelve years as Secretary (the maximum is now five years!).

'Bish', as he was known to his closest friends, could be resolute if he had a point to make but was always ready to offer advice and was most generous and kind in response to the smallest service. His Paul Harris Fellowship was awarded in 1983, but he refused an Honorary Membership, preferring to remain Senior Active. Though 'excused attendance' in later years, his percentage was the envy of many!

Over two hundred attended the funeral of Mrs. Lilian Matthiae at Holy Trinity Church on 19th September. Lily was a Founder Member of the Inner Wheel Club of Richmond in 1936 and was the obvious choice to be President in the club's Jubilee Year, 1986-87. Inner Wheel decided to continue with her plans for their celebrations in December as a fitting tribute and received many donations to their Charities Fund in her memory.

Lily's dedication to her fellow men and women was incredible. With her husband Reg she was prominent in the setting up of the Richmond Rotary Club's munitions works during World War II which enabled 160 volunteers to process some 10,000,000 components. In addition to serving as the club's President twice before, she was Chairman of Inner Wheel District 14 in 1947-48. Both her husband Reg and son Richard have served as Presidents of the Rotary Club.

Among her many local interests she was the very active chairman of Richmond Club for the Blind, handled the domestic affairs of Zetland House for the elderly in Kings Road and was a trustee of the Richmond Church Estate Almshouses in Sheen Road. Years of involvement with the management of the Royal Hospital led to her vice-chairmanship of the Hospital Friends. In addition she was a pillar of Christ Church, Kew Road, where the family were regular worshippers.

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## **CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS**

The Rotary 'Tree of Goodwill' continued to be erected and decorated each Christmas in Lower George Street. In all weathers, members would shake collect-ing tins on the surrounding pavements, with one member dressed as Santa Claus to amuse the children and offer them a 'sweetie'.

A generous gesture by a Richmond businessman, Neil Burgess of Burfield Construction Ltd., provided the Club for some years with the large 'Tree of Goodwill' and a number of smaller trees which were given to local old peoples homes, clubs and churches. When Neil became a Rotarian, the collecting of the trees from his forest in Kent was a highlight of the Club's student programme (described elsewhere). Even when in 1993 the Club decided to abandon its 'static' collections in George Street, Mr. Burgess (who had resigned from the Club due to business pressures) continued to supply a Christmas tree to brighten an otherwise poorly decorated town centre.

The alternative method adopted for raising the funds to be distributed to local deserving causes was to construct a 'sleigh' on a trailer which could be drawn through the residential streets of Richmond, Petersham and Ham carrying Father Christmas, illuminated with fairy lights and enlivened by the sounds of seasonal music. Past Presidents Robert Dowler and Nick Bond were responsible for the construction of the sleigh which was well-received wherever it went. Members and their ladies knocked on doors to request donations, assisted on some occasions by Rotaractors (and, more recently, Rotaservers).

By the following Christmas the Barnes Rotary Club had closed and, assisted by the larger membership which resulted, it was possible to increase the number of collecting nights and extend the area covered into East Sheen and Barnes. The consequently greater amount collected enabled more organisations to benefit including a number in the new districts. A smaller, more manoeuvrable sleigh was created by President Chris Kenward in 1997 and attracted record collections which were again beaten in 1998 when over £4,000 was amassed.

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### **WHITTON'S CONTRIBUTION TO RICHMOND**

When it became possible for the Rotary Club to expand its Christmas collections by the addition of a rush-hour session at Richmond Station, the Whitton Churches Choral Society, led by their conductor Bernard Langham, offered to render carols to the commuters. Their glorious singing was very popular and was rewarded after two hours by mince pies, coffee and a wee dram in a Rotarian's office nearby.

Rotarian Tod Raven-Hill and his wife Aileen are very involved in the life of St. Edmund's R.C. Church in Whitton, the home of The Edmundian Players, an amateur dramatic society with a high reputation. Every other year the Players stage an excellent pantomime and one of their performances has been given each time to members of Mencap, usually in the presence of the Mayor. Sweets are distributed, the cost of which is covered by a donation from the Club. The show invariably delights the audience and at the final curtain the cast come down into the hall to meet them - a wonderful gesture. Their musical director, incidentally, is Bernard Langham, who conducted the choir in Richmond Station.

It should also be recorded that the church congregation remarkably raised £2,500 in 1989 towards Rotary's PolioPlus campaign, President Robert Dowler accepting their cheque at an International Party in March.

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### **LONDON PRIDE MUSIC HALL**

Rotary charities have benefited from a number of 'final' performances over the years by 'London Pride Music Hall', once described as 'a felicitous, flaccid, yet fortunately forgettable floribunda of fripperous foppery and flirtatious flummery'.

Chaired by former ex-Round Tabler Bob Salter, the artistes come from the Barnes & Richmond Operatic Society, including T.V. personality Alan Titchmarsh, and Richmond Rotary's very own Richard Matthiae and his good lady who prefers to be known in such thespian circles as Miss Mandy Stenhouse.

Most of their shows have been staged at York House, Twickenham with a meal served before the performance and a certain local brew to whet the whistle. Together with the proceeds of raffles arranged by the Club at their performances, 'London Pride' has raised many thousands of pounds for the Rotary Foundation and other charities. This has enabled a number of Paul Harris Fellowships to be awarded, culminating with an on-stage presentation to Richard Matthiae in March 1998. He was wearing fishnet tights and a very short dress at the time!

B.R.O.S. have continued to support the Club in recent years by providing the choir to sing in Richmond station as part of the Christmas collections. The station's acoustics provide a fine location for commuters to enjoy their delightful voices.

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### **FAIRS PLEASE!**

The Club's first attendance at the annual Richmond May Fair was on 13th May 1978, the day after Ted Pilgrim's President's Night. While the Rotaract Club sold gingerbread men, Rotarians and their families concentrated on raffling tickets for a gallon of whisky, resulting in a profit of £150. The May Fair is a firmly established fixture in the Richmond social calendar and Rotary remains keenly involved.

In addition to the eternal whisky or Champagne raffle, sales of food, hot and/or cold, have been successful, accompanied in recent years by a very remunerative coconut shy manned by Rotaractors and Rotaservers. Rotarian Bob Nation's innovation in 1993, the 'Human Fruit Machine', caused much amusement. Three operators disclosed 'fruits' at random with various combinations winning the prize. It hardly raised a fortune but it did draw a crowd!

### **Charities Fair**

In 1989 and again in 1995 the Club invited other service organisations in the Borough to meet charitable groups to consider 'Needs and Resources'. Resources were found for a number of needs, many of them simple but vital to the charities' progress. The second meeting attracted nearly 200 people and its worth was recognised by the award of District 114's 'Community Award'.

Out of this meeting came the idea of a Charities Fair in conjunction with the Richmond Council for Voluntary Service. Local branches of national charities and smaller bodies in the immediate area were able to tell the public about themselves and raise modest sums towards their aims. Fifty stalls were set up in York House, Twickenham on Saturday, 2nd March 1996 for the well-publicised event which, it was estimated, raised £2,000 for the participating organisations. With the Club's assistance, the C.V.S. repeated the event in October 1998, this time with seventy stalls filling the four halls at York House.



## **Barnes Fair**

One of the concerns of the members of the Barnes Club who joined Richmond in 1994 was whether their new Club would be willing to continue the major part they had played in the Barnes Village Fair, held each July by the pond on Barnes Common. Realising that the Club's charitable funds could receive a sizeable boost (£1,300 was ultimately raised), the Community Service committee took the project on board. Guided by the ex-Barnes team including some who were not rejoining Rotary, Richmond took responsibility for the barbecue (a major undertaking masterminded by Past President Ali Redjeb) and coconut shy, adding a whisky raffle, the 'Human Fruit Machine' and Rotary's 'Raise a Million' car competition for good measure. The Barnes Fair has joined Richmond May Fair as an excellent day of Club fellowship with a financial result to make the effort well worthwhile.

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## **THE ROYAL STAR & GARTER HOME**

The famous home for disabled ex-servicemen on the top of Richmond Hill has long been a recipient of the Club's funds and personal service by its members. For many years Past President Alex Bunce was a member of the home's Summer Ball committee, organising a massive tombola with the aid of his wife and other ladies of the Inner Wheel Club. In due course, Rotarian Jim Gale was co-opted to the committee which raised considerable sums.

One of the home's senior residents, Charlie Hankins, has achieved a number of incredible feats to raise funds including parachute jumps and long distance runs in his hand-propelled wheel chair (Charlie has two artificial legs!). Rotary Clubs along his route were able to assist when he made a sponsored trip to the south coast.

In 1991 the Club learned of a shortage of volunteers to run the residents' bar at the home at the weekends. A rota was quickly set up whereby Rotarians staff the bar on each third Saturday and Sunday, a service which is greatly appreciated by those residents who are fit enough to enjoy its facilities (and very reasonable prices!). Rotaract and Rotasery members have also assisted on other occasions.

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## **THE PRINCESS ALICE HOSPICE**

Another local establishment with which Richmond Rotary has retained a close relationship is The Princess Alice Hospice at Esher which has offered its services over a wide area including Richmond since 1986. Its architect, Graham Locke, became a Rotarian and arranged a visit to the newly-built Hospice which encouraged the Club to make various donations in the next few years including a substantial amount contributed by competitors in the 5th Richmond Marathon.

In October 1995 the Richmond Committee of the Friends of the Hospice asked the Club to become involved with a 10th Anniversary Concert to be staged in the open air at Ham House. With a contribution from the Club to cover some of the

costs, 'The Last Night of the Summer Proms' took place on Sunday, 30th June 1996 with members acting as car park attendants, ushers, money collectors and finally deck-chair attendants. Some £15,000 was raised and a similar sum resulted from a successful repeat of the concert in June 1998; it is expected to become an annual event from now on.

The fund-raising for the Hospice includes the annual Varsity Match party reported elsewhere. And on 13th September 1997 a concert was given for the Club at St. Augustine's Church, Whitton by 'Brass 2000' an award-winning band of young musicians, resulting in donations of £500 each to The Princess Alice Hospice and the Holly Lodge Centre in Richmond Park.

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### THE LADIES - GOD BLESS 'EM

A fundamental change to Rotary International occurred during the period currently under review. In 1986 the California Appeal Court held "that Rotary and its local Clubs are business establishments and therefore prohibited from excluding females from member-ship". By June 1987 the Supreme Court had upheld the ruling and less than a year later the Richmond Club was given the opportunity of deciding whether it would accept ladies, Rotary International having decreed, that, unless compelled by the law of the land (as in the U.S.A.), Clubs could determine whether or not to remain single



gender. However, if a change was made, it would be irrevocable. Arguments were made for the admittance of women but a vote in February 1988 rejected the change by 22 to 12 with 2 abstentions. The subject has been aired several times since but to date Richmond remains a male preserve!

Richmond also remains one of the ever-decreasing number of lunch time Rotary Clubs. As previously mentioned, an experiment was tried in 1993 of holding one evening meeting monthly but while it enabled a few members to enjoy a more relaxed meeting, several senior members living out of town would not make the journey solely for the meal. The compromise of holding evening meetings whenever there is a fifth Tuesday, and inviting the ladies to attend, has proved reasonably successful - more so if a good speaker can be arranged.

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## **LOCAL ROTARY**

The need for an evening Rotary Club in the Borough having been established, the Twickenham Club formed one in 1978, naming it Twickenham-upon-Thames (a confusion that remains to this day).

In July 1982, District 114 of Rotary International, which until then had extended from the Thames to the south coast and had grown to eighty-three Clubs, was divided, roughly along the line of the North Downs. The southern area became District 125 while forty-nine Clubs formed the new District 114 under Governor Tony Rees of Esher. Around 1991-92 Rotary International found it necessary to add a zero to every District, so it became 1140. The corresponding Inner Wheel District retains its original number of 14, dating back to the days when the District numbers only referred to the British Isles.

Vocational Service Committee chairman Frank Gibson saw the potential for a Probus Club in Richmond (for retired PROfessional and BUSiness men) in 1983 and worked tirelessly to establish it in November. A number of Rotarians joined and remain in the independent club but the majority of the fifty strong membership have not had Rotary connections.

At around the same time changes in Rotary International rules allowed the conjoining of the territories of the five Clubs in Richmond upon Thames to the Borough boundaries. Whilst the Richmond Club's 'sphere of influence' remains the old Richmond borough, it provided the opportunity for a potential Rotarian within or immediately beyond the larger area to join any of the Clubs.

Meanwhile both the Barnes and Twickenham-upon-Thames Clubs had separately been considering the possibility of further 'extension'. Discussions with Richmond eventually lead to the formation of the Rotary Club of Kew Gardens with the support of all five existing Clubs. It was inaugurated in January 1984 with 25 members and received its Charter at the Camellia Restaurant, Syon Park on 12th October. Richmond's gift to the new Club took the form of its Rotary bell.

### **A Special Year**

1989-90 was a very special year for the Rotary Club of Richmond (Surrey) when for only the second time, one of its members became the District Governor. Brian Frith had joined the Club following an active career as a Round Tabler. For many years he resolutely maintained that Rotary life began and ended within Clubs, but in 1983 he was persuaded to join the District International Service committee. The rest, as they say, is history! A year later he was chairman of the committee, becoming one of the District's Vice-Chairmen in 1986.

By the time Brian became Governor Nominee the District realised it could look forward to a 'different' year, especially as he would be following the reserved manner of Governor Douglas Goddard. The Richmond Club, too, was about to have its work cut out. One of the Governor's duties is to visit each of his Clubs at least once officially, meaning a lot of driving and socialising. Richmond provided a rota of 'minders' who got Governor Brian to and from the meetings in good order. They also had to suffer his jokes more than once!

The other major commitment taken on for Brian's year was the organisation of his District Conference at Brighton in October. Rotarian Nigel Messenger was appointed Conference Chairman and Past President Peter Simmonds worked unceasingly as Registrar. Virtually the whole Club was involved in one way or another - it was a hectic, but highly memorable weekend which culminated with the surprise award to the Governor of a Paul Harris Fellowship by his Club. Nearly 800 delegates attended and many letters of appreciation were received with comments such as: "We appreciate your kindness and hospitality in what was a wonderful Conference", "The content was first class and the fellowship was most enjoyable" and "Everyone put their heart into the Conference and it showed".

Brian Frith's year of office is still remembered by many. He was determined that Rotary should be enjoyed but had, of course, changed his opinion about the worth of Districts. When asked, "Is District necessary?" he answered without hesitation, "Yes - to orchestrate, to co-ordinate and inspire acts of service, to encourage Clubs to work together and now Districts to work together." He went on to serve for two years on the R.I.B.I. Public Relations committee.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **THE RICHMOND MARATHONS**

One of the tenets of Rotary has been to seek out needs, attend to them and, if possible, to pass the work on to others once it is firmly established. How was it, then, that the Richmond Club took on the organisation of a running race that had already existed for three years and, six years later, abandoned it?

The Richmond Marathon had been successfully organised since 1982 by two teachers from Greycourt School, Caroline Bishop and Barry Watts. Other commitments and lack of resources meant that they could no longer manage the event themselves, but when the Club agreed to take over, they willingly agreed to act as consultants.

Using a route which basically followed the Middlesex bank of the Thames to Hampton Court, returning on the Surrey side, the 4th Richmond Marathon on Sunday, 4th September 1985 needed a large committee to organise and an army of officials and marshals. To complicate life still further a Half-Marathon took place concurrently, involving the two sets of runners being 'sorted' at one point to ensure no one went the wrong way.

In the first year of the Club's involvement 963 paid entries were received. Despite the tremendous workload taken on by the organisers, the committee pronounced the event a success and immediately began planning for the 5th Richmond Marathon in October 1986 which attracted a similar entry but proved to be somewhat less traumatic than their first effort. A sizeable donation was made to The Princess Alice Hospice as a result.

On the recommendation of Hugh Brasher, son of Chris and boss of the race sponsors, The Sweat Shop in Teddington, the 1987 event was restricted to a Half-Marathon as this had become the preference of most runners. A new route was measured and another successful race took place on 20th September, the proceeds from which

benefited PolioPlus and local charities. It all happened again the following year on 9th October with 850+ entries.

Just a couple of weeks before Richmond's District Conference was due to take place, the Club was entertaining 900 runners once more on 24th September 1989. A major development occurred in 1990 when Pepsi Cola, with newly opened offices in Richmond, donated £5,000, the name of the event on 16th September becoming 'The Pepsi Challenge Richmond Half-Marathon'.

And that was the last of the Richmond Marathons! The organising committee had remained largely unchanged throughout the six years and all felt due for a rest. No other members were prepared to take up the reins so the event disappeared from the calendar. Was it missed by the runners? There are plenty of similar races every weekend so the answer is probably - no. Obviously the losers were the charities the Club had been able to assist as a result of the six races. But as most distance runners attract personal sponsorship for charities they support each time they compete, it must be hoped that the entrants in the Richmond Marathons continue to help many worthy causes.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **A REAL COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Growing concern in 1995 about the risks of transporting young people on busier and busier roads led to Rotarian Chris Kenward, himself an ex-policeman, co-ordinating the production of Guidelines for the Safety of Drivers and Passengers using Minibuses. The approval was sought of the Community Service committees of both the District and Rotary International in Great Britain & Ireland prior to publication. It was then distributed through Clubs, youth organisations and schools. The District committee rewarded Chris with a framed certificate for his outstanding effort, one of only two such awards presented that year.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **ROTARY INTERNATIONAL'S PROGRAMMES**

It had always been a tradition that Rotary Clubs were autonomous in deciding on the projects they supported, though District, R.I.B.I. and R.I. could always provide inspiration and assistance when required.

This changed in 1978-79 as Rotary celebrated its 75th Anniversary with the '3H' Programme of Health, Hunger and Humanity which every Club world-wide was asked to support with a minimum donation of £7.50 per member. Successful activities at the 1979 May Fair enabled Richmond to reach its target easily in the knowledge that its £400 was enough to give 6,000 children protection from polio. In addition to major immunisation schemes, the programme intended to undertake nutritional, social and human development projects, underwrite Rotarians who volunteered their skills abroad and finance self-help projects that could continue after Rotary support stopped - schemes too large for any one Club or District.

Grants from the programme amounting to \$47 million have been made to date to 188 projects in 58 countries and the 3H Programme is continuing its valuable work.

### **PolioPlus**

The initial success of the 3H Programme led on in 1985 to the incredibly ambitious plans of PolioPlus to eradicate polio entirely by 2005, the centenary of Rotary. Much of the Richmond Club's fund-raising efforts over the next two years were devoted to this purpose, including the Richmond Half-Marathon in 1987.

The Rotary Foundation's Annual Report for 1997-1998 was able to announce that polio had been totally eliminated from the western hemisphere and 160 countries world-wide reported no polio cases. By the year 2005, Rotarians will have contributed \$425 million to the global polio eradication effort.

As a part of the Rotary Foundation, Rotary International's own charity, contributions to PolioPlus counted towards the 'purchasing' of Paul Harris Fellowships at \$1,000 each, always regarded in R.I.B.I. as awards to named recipients rather than simply receipts for personal donations. The Richmond Club's fine efforts in support of the programme resulted in an entitlement to a number of Fellowships, but the high regard placed upon them caused the Club to delay making awards until worthy recipients were identified. Richmond was not alone in this situation and in 1997 the Foundation ultimately placed a time limit on the naming of Fellows. To resolve the situation, a committee of members already holding the award was assembled. They recommended a list of new and deserving P.H.F.s from within and outside the Club, most of whom have now received their awards. Included are a number of Past Presidents together with leaders of other service organisations in the community, all of whom have made special contributions towards Rotary's ideals.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **KIDS OUT**



It was the Rotary Club of Kingston-upon-Thames that in 1990 began Rotary's co-operation with Littlewood Stores to make the second Wednesday in June 'Kids Out' day, the idea being to take a group of deserving children out for a day's entertainment.

Together with other Clubs surrounding the Littlewood store in Hounslow, Richmond took up the project in 1991. 344 children accompanied by their carers were taken in Rotarians' decorated cars from Twickenham Rugby Ground to Thorpe Park. Richmond drivers took pupils from Strathmore School in Petersham who enjoyed a fantastic day at Thorpe Park with a packed lunch, as many rides as they could manage and amusement provided by Rotaractors in clown costumes.

The event took a great deal of organisation before hand to ensure that the right children and carers were with the right drivers and that everyone would get home safely in the evening. Many members were involved and it would be wrong to single any out.

Such was the success of the day that it was immediately included in the following year's calendar and has become an annual feature which Rotarians and 'kids' alike look forward to. In the meantime 'Kids Out' has become a project for many hundreds of Rotary Clubs, giving thousands and thousands of children a wonderful day's entertainment.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **YOUTH CHALLENGE 2000**



In a year when Rotary International's theme was 'Build the • Future with Action and Vision', special emphasis was placed on the needs of the younger generation. To this end, President Chris Kenward devised 'Youth Challenge 2000 - a forum for the new generations' which took place at York House, Twickenham on Saturday, 19th April 1997.

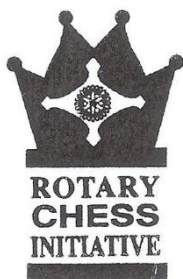
Lack of publicity in the local schools was blamed for a smaller number of students than had been hoped, but those who did attend were able to make presentations to an audience which included senior representatives of the Education Committee, the Youth Service, the Police, the Chamber of Commerce and the Richmond Parish Lands Charity. The forum was kindly and ably chaired by His Worship the Mayor of Richmond, Cllr. Mike Rowlands.

Following the presentations, workshop groups were formed under experienced youth workers who then reported back findings. In summary, there were calls for more opportunities for young people to make their opinions heard, for adults to listen and, most importantly it appeared, for children to be able to discuss the topics that concerned them amongst themselves before telling the older generation.

The participants were each presented with certificates to mark their attendance and contributions. At the conclusion of the afternoon there appeared to be a consensus that similar events in the future could be beneficial to all concerned.

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### **CHEQUE MATE**



On 9th February 1998 President Chris Kenward and chairman of the Community Service Committee Ken Hitchcock presented a cheque for £550 at Lowther School, Barnes to support the 'Rotary Chess Initiative', known locally as the 'Richmond Chess Initiative'. This was to be used to start and continue chess lessons at Lowther, Holy Trinity and East Sheen Primary Schools, purchasing chess sets and paying for an instructor. This project, encouraged by Ur. Anne Summers when she was Mayor, is an extension of an idea from the Teddington & The Hamptons Club which has now become a national project.

The Club has also given substantial support to R.I.D.E., a drugs education programme provided by Metropolitan Police officers. A caravan is being purchased to enable them to take their important message to schools and other venues where young people can be advised.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **A FINAL THOUGHT**

Today's Richmond Rotarians will be familiar with this title as it heads the last entry in each Club bulletin - a pithy saying, proverb or bon mot to inspire or amuse.

The Club is celebrating its 75th Anniversary less adventurously than it marked its 50th year but with no less sense of achievement. A Service of Thanksgiving is being held at St. Augustine's Church, Whitton on Sunday, 21st February 1999, the actual birthday. It is to be conducted by the Club's Honorary Chaplain, the Revd. Rod Cosh, whose attendances at Rotary meetings have provided some very original Graces! The Service is to be followed by Luncheon in the Church Hall in the presence of the Mayor, Councillor Mary Weber, with an address to be given by Hon. Member Past President Ted Herbert.

For seventy five years (as long as the pips have been broadcast by the BBC) members of the Rotary Club of Richmond (Surrey) have been inspired to 'Service Above Self, while at the same time deriving fellowship and amusement from their membership of a respected Club and a great movement, Rotary International.

A curious fact emerged as the writer recorded the events of the third quarter of the Club's first century. It has taken nearly as many pages to chronicle these twenty-five years as it did for Len McNae to describe the events of the first fifty. Does that mean that the Club has done more since 1974 (and there is much that must, of necessity, go unreported), or was Len far better at précis?

Every effort has been made to abbreviate the descriptions of the Club's activities in this period where possible. To do so further would be an injustice to the participants - the members of a very fine Rotary Club.



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**Bold Italic** entries refer to Richmond Rotarians (including Honorary Members) at the date of publication.

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