



# Rotary Matters

Maidenhead  
**Rotary**  
Club



The digital newspaper for Maidenhead Rotary Club - no.3 August 2021

# Welcome back

Picture caption



## Laughter and smiles as club holds first physical meeting since start of lockdown

AN EVENING of smiles, laughter and much-missed fellowship was enjoyed by Rotarians and members of the wider Rotary family as the club held its first physical meeting since the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions 18 months ago.

The meeting, on Monday, July 26, at Taplow House Hotel, was the rescheduled presidential handover and attended by about 60 members, their partners and

guests. It provided the perfect opportunity for Rotarians to catch up properly, after holding meetings by Zoom since February 2020.

Outgoing president Mary Spinks thanked members for their support during a difficult year before presenting her successor Martin Trepte and president's lady Amel Alariqi with their chains of office.

Martin paid tribute to Mary for her leadership in a year which had seen the club adapt to remote meetings and still run a number of successful projects that proved the importance of Rotary during the pandemic.

The handover ceremony also saw new president elect Jim Howles presented with his badge of office. For the full story of the handover meeting see P4-5.

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## Brainbox Graham wins Ollie the Owl



GRAHAM Brunsten has been crowned king of the club's weekly quiz.

He was awarded the coveted Ollie the Owl trophy for the top score in the quiz during the last Rotary Year at the business meeting on Monday, August 2. Mike Holness came second and Eddie Clarke third in the popular brainteaser organised by question master Barry Thorne.

WELCOME to the latest edition of Rotary Matters, the digital newspaper for Maidenhead Rotary Club.

Apologies for there being such a long gap since the last edition. Originally it was planned to get this issue out in June, but circumstances - largely due to a busy schedule of Rotary events - caused a succession of delays.

First, I decided to hang on for Open Gardens, our first big public event of the year. Then a couple of weeks later it was the Bikeathon, so I decided to hang on for that. Then we had the possibility of a return to actual physical meetings with the

presidential handover - which again was well worth hanging on for, followed by the proposals for the club restructure...

The result is a bumper edition packed with news about the club and its activities over the last few months that will bring you bang up to date.

It paints a picture of a vibrant club still active and relevant despite the restrictions of Covid-19, and with the return of weekly face-to-face meetings let's hope we will be able to build on this whatever the new 'normal' looks like.

Martin Trepte  
Editor

# Meet our new district governor

## Rotary making a huge difference in the Thames Valley

IT IS a great privilege to be the District Governor for Rotary across the Thames Valley for the year from July 2021.

With 55 Rotary clubs, plus Rotaract, Interact and Rotakids clubs we have members making a huge difference in their local communities and supporting many international projects.

From Banbury in the north, Burford and Faringdon in the west, Hungerford and Newbury in the south and Pinner, Hillingdon and Uxbridge in the east you will find Rotary's presence supporting many initiatives.

You will see patches of purple crocuses promoting our global polio eradication campaign, you will glimpse the Rotary logo on food bank vans and community mini buses.

Clubs have donated laptops to schools, many Rotarians have helped at Covid vaccination centres, and a number of youth groups have benefited from Rotary grants for training, counselling



Karen Eveleigh

and facilities. These are all amazing examples of our Rotarians as People of Action.

Our Rotary International President for the year, Shekhar Mehta, is encouraging us to take advantage of our new Area of Focus 'Protecting the Environment'. Many of our clubs are already engaged with environmental projects, often in partnership with other community groups.

Empowering girls is another of Shekhar's key themes. While we often

think of the disadvantages that girls face in education in low income countries, there are still inequalities in our local communities and our clubs do already support young people and their programmes to close those gaps.

I look forward to visiting clubs, helping out at events and assisting Rotarians to tell their inspiring stories.

Karen Eveleigh  
District Governor for  
Rotary District 1090 in  
the Thames Valley



# Cricket club knocked for six by donation

**Rotarian Ramesh's legacy boosts colts and helps buy new electronic scoreboard**

A LEGACY in memory of a leading Rotarian has helped Boyne Hill Cricket Club buy a new electronic scoreboard and also provided a boost for young players.

Ramesh Kapur, the owner of RK Video and Television in Queen Street, was also a former president and long-serving member of Maidenhead Rotary Club.

When he died in 2017 he left Rotary a legacy of £5,000 to be used in support of the cricket club, of which he had been a board member.

Together with the club's own fundraising, the legacy helped secure further funding from Sport England which has paid for a new electronic scoreboard at the Bath Road ground.

Ramesh's legacy has also funded an honours board for the club's Colt of the Year, together with a shield to be awarded to the winner with a £100 grant to provide additional training at Lords.

On Saturday, July 31, members of Ramesh's family and Rotary past-president Mary Spinks were shown by cricket club chairman Stephen Spencer-Jones and treasurer Michael Powell how the money had been spent.

The club, which is going from strength to strength, is able to field five men's teams and has a burgeoning colts membership. It also has a growing female team which saw 27 players at its last training session.



**The visitors are shown the new electronic scoreboard by club officials.**

Stephen said: "We are very grateful to the Kapur family and Rotary for their support which has enabled us to improve the club. It has made a tremendous difference. We are a community club and this help from our wider community is really appreciated."

Ramesh's son Sundeep, who attended with his mother Anita, wife Shivani and young son Kian, said: "We are very proud the club is doing so well and the contribution from my father has made such a difference."

"He loved coming here and it meant a lot to him to be part of the club community. I played for the colts here for several years so it's lovely for our family to see his legacy continue to benefit the club and especially it's younger cricketers."

Mary added: "It's a great honour to

commemorate the memory of our Rotarian friend Ramesh in this way as he was such a strong supporter of Boyne Hill Cricket Club. We are looking forward to presenting the new colt of the year with their award and grant for additional training at the end of the season."



**Ramesh Kapur, who died in 2017.**



**Past-President Mary Spinks, Anita Kapur and cricket club chairman Stephen Spencer-Jones with the honours board.**

# A welcome night of fun and fellowship

**Handover ceremony marks first time club has met physically in more than a year**

PAST club president Mary Spinks was thanked for her leadership through 'the most difficult year in the club's history' by her successor at the official handover ceremony.

New president Martin Trepte told the club's first physical meeting for 18 months that Mary had led the club with quiet strength, humour and compassion.

"Her steady hand on the tiller enabled us to navigate the new reality of remote meetings to make the best of a bad situation, allowing us to maintain as much fellowship as possible and take advantage of opportunities for socially-distanced activities when restrictions allowed," he said.

While the club had adapted initiatives to remote working, such as the school interviews, Mary was adept at finding areas where Rotary could prove its relevance in the pandemic.

"As chair of PI, I have written about 50 articles about the club during Mary's year. By that measure alone we have not been remotely idle," said Martin.

Looking ahead to his presidential year, Martin said things remained uncertain and it was unclear what any future 'normal' will look like.

He said he aims to ensure the club can take advantage safely of what freedoms are allowed so it can raise funds but also foster the fellowship so important to Rotarians.

Martin outlined his priorities for the year ahead which included completing the review of the club, supporting new environmental and fellowship initiatives, and encouraging members to come



**President's lady Amel Alariqi, President Martin, President Elect Jim Howles and his wife Judith.**

up with their own projects.

As well as supporting the club's existing commitments to local and international charities, Martin said he

wanted to honour the humanitarian legacy of club member Sir Nicky Winton by raising money to help unaccompanied child refugees.

He also aims to personally complete a 1,000-mile sponsored run during his year as president in aid of the UNICEF Yemen Crisis Appeal.

The meeting, at Taplow House Hotel on Monday, July 26, also saw president's lady Amel Alariqi and new president elect Jim Howles presented with their badges of office before guests enjoyed their first meal together since February 2020.

Dinner was followed by an illustrated talk by Martin about a book he had produced to mark 150 years of the Maidenhead Advertiser.

Martin said: "It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. Being able to get together in person after meeting for so long over the internet was wonderful for everyone."



**Martin receives the president's chain from Mary Spinks**



# Rotary Matters: Presidential Handover





# ‘A most unusual year’

## Mary Spinks look back at being president during a year of Covid-19 restrictions

IMMEDIATE past president Mary Spinks has led Maidenhead Rotary Club through what has to be one of its most unusual and difficult years.

Assuming the presidency part-way through the first Covid-19 lockdown, she has been acutely aware of the isolation caused by the pandemic and the need to keep the flame of fellowship alive during a year when most meetings took place by Zoom.

“On the first day of my Presidential year, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of the death of our famous Rotarian Sir Nicholas Winton, in Oaken Grove, maintaining social distancing. We were hopeful we would soon be free of restrictions,” said Mary.

“But apart from that event, the wonderful picnic at Pat and June Moore’s, and the planting of crocuses, we have had a bad year for socialising.”

With club meetings held remotely every two weeks, all social events such as the presidential lunch, weekend away and the Quadrilateral in St Cloud were cancelled.

“But the business of our club continued,” said Mary. “Despite meeting by Zoom attendance has been about the same as our usual meetings, though some of those in business have not attended as they were ‘zooming’ all day.”

In August 2020 Mary and club secretary Frank Knowles signed a new constitution and by-laws documents following consultation with all members. The year also saw Howard McBrien made an honorary member of the club.

Mary made every effort to foster fun and fellowship at meetings. At one evening meeting a hat competition was held, when everyone wore amusing



headgear. It was judged by the speaker and the winners were Eddie and Eileen Clarke. And despite the lockdown restrictions Mary left no stone unturned in looking for ways Rotary could help the community during the pandemic.

She oversaw a donation of £1,000 to the Norden Farm Ark Appeal, as the arts centre was in danger of closing due to lack of funds because of the effects of lockdown. The club supported Rotarian Harry Patel’s efforts to provide meals to underprivileged school children, and also contributed £4,500 to the Maidenhead Bridge Club’s volunteer project.

And the committees continued to be as busy as ever, making grants to numerous beneficiaries such as Thames Valley Adventure Playground in Taplow, and the Aarti project in India, while the Boundary Walk was able to go ahead in a safe ‘bubble’ format.

Mary said one of the most worthwhile initiatives of her year was the club’s own Covid-19 Heroes Awards.

Inspired by her nursing background, Mary came up with the idea of honouring those in our community and health services who had gone beyond the call of duty during the pandemic.

Helped by Martin Trepte and Malcolm Falconer, and joined by Theresa May for the final judging, Mary’s

scheme saw a total of £1,000 awarded to worthy winners.

Rotary Day in February was marked by Mary planting a Rowan tree near Nicky Winton’s memorial garden in Oaken Grove with the help of Cllr Donna Stimson, who helped make the arrangements.

Sadly the last year saw three deaths in the club - Ted Roffey, Sheila Fontaine who died from Covid, and the untimely loss of Harry Patel, also from Covid. “They will all be missed,” said Mary.

There was positive news about Rotaract, which saw its ranks swell despite Covid-19.

Mary said: “Thanks to the sterling efforts of Matthew Burdett and Lisa Hunter from Maidenhead Bridge, there are now eight members and they have their own president.”

And while two Quadrilaterals in a row have been cancelled, links with our twin clubs in St Cloud, Tivoli and Bonn were maintained by videoconferences and a light-hearted quiz.

One of Mary’s biggest regrets is that she could not complete her Rotary Connect project to tackle loneliness by linking schoolchildren with elderly people in care homes.

“Because of the restrictions due to lockdown and the vulnerability of both groups, this never really got off the ground. Safety had to come first,” she said.

Mary continued: “My thanks go to all who have supported me during this challenging year. The chairman and the members of each of our committees have worked hard to keep our club active, despite the restrictions.”



Planting a tree on Rotary Day



Mary help feed pupils during half-term.

## £1,000 boost for the TVAP

A CHARITY providing unique support for those with special needs will be able to help even more young people following a boost from Maidenhead Rotary Club.

It made a £1,000 grant to the Thames Valley Adventure Playground (TVAP) in Taplow, which will be used to fund activities for families with children aged under 21.

TVAP offers activities for children and adults with all types of disability. It helps more than 30,000 people a year and has annual running costs of £350,000, just five per cent of which comes from local authority grants.

Reama Shearman, from TVAP, said: "I want to say a heartfelt thank-you to Rotary."

# Harry's Aarti legacy

## New community kitchen will be created in memory of Rotarian

MORE than £2,500 collected in memory of a popular Rotarian and Maidenhead restaurateur will be used to create a lasting legacy to him by a charity close to his heart.

The money was raised following the death from Covid-19 in February of Himanshu Patel, known to everyone as Harry, owner of Gourmet Chicken in the town centre.

It will be used to create and equip a kitchen in a building being renovated as a Women's Wellness Centre in Kadapa, a small mining town in Andhra Pradesh, India. The project is run by the Aarti Children's Home, which provides a home and education for orphaned, abandoned and abused children. The charity also runs training programmes promoting health and hygiene in its community.

It is regularly supported by Maidenhead Rotary Club, of which Himanshu was a long-serving and active member and he had met representatives from Aarti when they visited Maidenhead several years ago.

Called 'Himanshu/Harry's



Harry Patel

Kitchen', the project will provide training in cooking and nutrition to both young people from Aarti and women in the wider community.

In addition, part of the half-acre site around the building will become 'Himanshu/Harry's Garden', growing organic vegetables for the kitchen and to support nutrition and education in sustainability.

Himanshu's wife Alka said:

"It was wonderful that people donated money and Himanshu would be proud there is going to be a kitchen in his name and that his legacy will continue.

"He was always putting other people before himself and would be amazed and honoured that this will improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls."

She added: "I hope our children and I can one day go out and see it for ourselves.

Himanshu loved to share his passion for cooking. It's a shame he won't be there to impart his cooking skills himself but it's so nice to know that his passion will live on."

Maidenhead Rotary Club president Mary Spinks said: "Aarti has already made a big difference to children's lives.

"This memorial to Harry is very appropriate as one of the last things he did was organise and finance meals for less well-off children during half-term.

He was a true Rotarian and his lifetime work in catering means he would have very much approved of this project."

## Bargains bagged as club sets out its stall at boot sale

A GRAND total of £530 was raised for Maidenhead Rotary Club as visitors to Taplow car boot sale flocked to 'bag a bargain' over the May bank holiday weekend.

Yvonne Johnson-Mullin, Cathie Lodge and club president Mary Spinks manned a stall selling donated pre-loved designer and vintage bags, scarves, belts and costume jewellery.

Called Bag-a-Bargain, the project is the brainchild of Yvonne and was originally intended to take place just before Christmas in the Nicholson's Centre in Maidenhead.

But Covid-19 lockdowns thwarted the initiative until Yvonne hit upon the idea of setting out her stall at the outdoor Taplow car boot sale on the Sunday and Monday. She said: "We had two brilliant days. Mary and Cathie were superstars. The more seasoned traders were very welcoming and helpful too and some even donated things to sell at future events!"

The team still had plenty of stock left and a second, though less successful, outing took place in July at a charity event at North Maidenhead Cricket Club and still more are to follow.



Mary Spinks and Yvonne Johnson-Mullin with the Bag-a-Bargain stall.



# Open Gardens weekend is a blooming success

**Sell-out inaugural event doubles fundraising target to bring in £6,473 for charities**

THE club's first Rotary Open Gardens weekend at the end of June was a run-away success that resulted in a total of £6,473 raised for charities including Dementia Research, Thames Hospice and Maidenhead Blind Club.

Tickets had sold out in advance for the event, which saw 24 gardens across Maidenhead throw open their gates on the Saturday and Sunday to more than 600 visitors.

Individual garden owners and the Fisheries Residents' Association raised additional money for charities by selling plants, books and refreshments.

Other attractions at gardens included live music, art and craft demonstrations and even the chance to ask the advice of BBC Berkshire gardening expert Colin Evans.

"The Open Gardens Weekend wasn't just about fundraising," said organiser Janet Perry. "We wanted to create a new community event for Maidenhead, which we hope we have done. We have had so many positive comments."

Maidenhead MP Theresa May visited the event on Sunday when she toured the garden of Jo Ayre, in the riverside area.

She said: "One of the good things that has come out of the pandemic is that people have started to enjoy and appreciate their gardens a lot more. The Open Gardens Weekend is a great idea. It's raising money for good causes and also gives people a lot of pleasure see-



**BBC garden expert Colin Evans (left) was on hand to give advice.**

ing other people's gardens and getting ideas from them. And when you see a garden like this one that has been lovingly cared for, it's just inspirational."

Maidenhead Rotary Club President Mary Spinks added: "Open Gardens has been a fantastic success and is an event that just has to continue every year."

"Thanks to Janet and her team, to Braywick Nurseries for their support, and to all of the garden owners and volunteers, who made it possible."

One visitor said: "We enjoyed the event so much. Not just the beautiful gardens, which were so lovely to visit,

but all the people we met, and the garden owners who were so friendly and willing to talk about their gardens."

Organisers are looking to expand the event next year to include more gardens and raise even more money for good causes.

They want to hear from the owners of more gardens prepared to open their gates, especially in areas not represented this year such as Cookham. Also being sought are more charity partners which might like to get involved.

For more details email the club at: [rotaryclubofmaidenhead@gmail.com](mailto:rotaryclubofmaidenhead@gmail.com)



**Mary Spinks and organiser Janet Perry.**



**Keen gardeners found much to admire and inspire.**



# Rotary Matters: Open Gardens



Exploring one of the impressive gardens.



Peter and Linda Hughes sold refreshments in the Fisheries in aid of Thames Hospice.



Visitors enjoy a tropical-themed garden.



Live music was enjoyed at some gardens.



Serving up refreshments to visitors.



MP Theresa May with visitors to Jo Ayre's garden.



Plants sales did a roaring trade at many gardens.





Just some of the litter collected by Martin on his runs to date.

# New president to run 1,000 miles for Yemen

**Raising money for UNICEF appeal and doing his bit for End Plastic Soup on the way**

NEW club president Martin Trepte is aiming to raise money for the world's worst humanitarian crisis at the same time as helping protect the environment.

Martin, who took over from Mary Spinks on July 1, aims to run 1,000 miles during his presidential year in aid of the Unicef Crisis Appeal for Yemen - picking up plastic litter as he goes.

More than 12 million children in Yemen are threatened by war, disease and hunger, and lack access to clean water, sanitation and basic healthcare. The situation is made even worse by the impact of Covid-19 on a country where the health system is on the brink of collapse after five years of war.

A keen runner who has chalked up several full and half-marathons, Martin said: "I'm asking for people to sponsor me to run 1,000 miles for Yemen during my year as president. It's a very personal commitment for me as Amel, the president's lady, is from Yemen and her family is there. Running solo is also a way of fundraising that can't be stopped by Covid restrictions."

Alongside humanitarian work, protecting the environment is now a priority for Rotary, which has an initiative to stop plastic waste being dumped in our rivers and seas by 2050, called End Plastic Soup.

Martin said: "Plastics break down into tiny pieces in our seas and rivers, threatening both the environment and our health. So during my runs I'll also be doing my bit to end plastic soup by taking a bag with me and picking up litter as I go."



**Martin Trepte is running 1,000 miles during his year as president.**

Six weeks into his challenge and Martin has clocked up more than 140 miles and raised £1,941. He has also picked up what he describes as a shocking amount of litter, much of it single-use plastics.

"It just goes to show the value of initiatives like End Plastic Soup. We all have to reduce our use of single-use

plastics but we also have to educate people about the harm they do. We also need more action to clean up our environment and step up efforts to find alternatives to so much plastic being produced in the first place."

To support Martin and follow his progress see: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/martin-trepte](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/martin-trepte)



# Pupils benefit from Rotarians' experience

## 160 sixth-formers gain interview skills through schools engagement programme

EXPERT advice on applying for jobs and how to stand out in interviews has been given about 160 students as part of Maidenhead Rotary Club's Schools Engagement Programme.

In June Rotarian Malcolm Falconer presented online sessions to 100 sixth-formers at Holyport college about the importance of having a strong CV, being able to write email applications, preparing for and coming across well in interviews, and asking relevant questions.

"Being able to create a memory and being able to do this well certainly improves your chances when applying for a job or university. Applicants have to make themselves memorable and you do this by being able to give powerful examples and tell interesting stories," said Malcolm, a former HR director and regular speaker at Slough Job Club.

The sessions were initially intended to be live but there was a Covid outbreak and students were sent home.

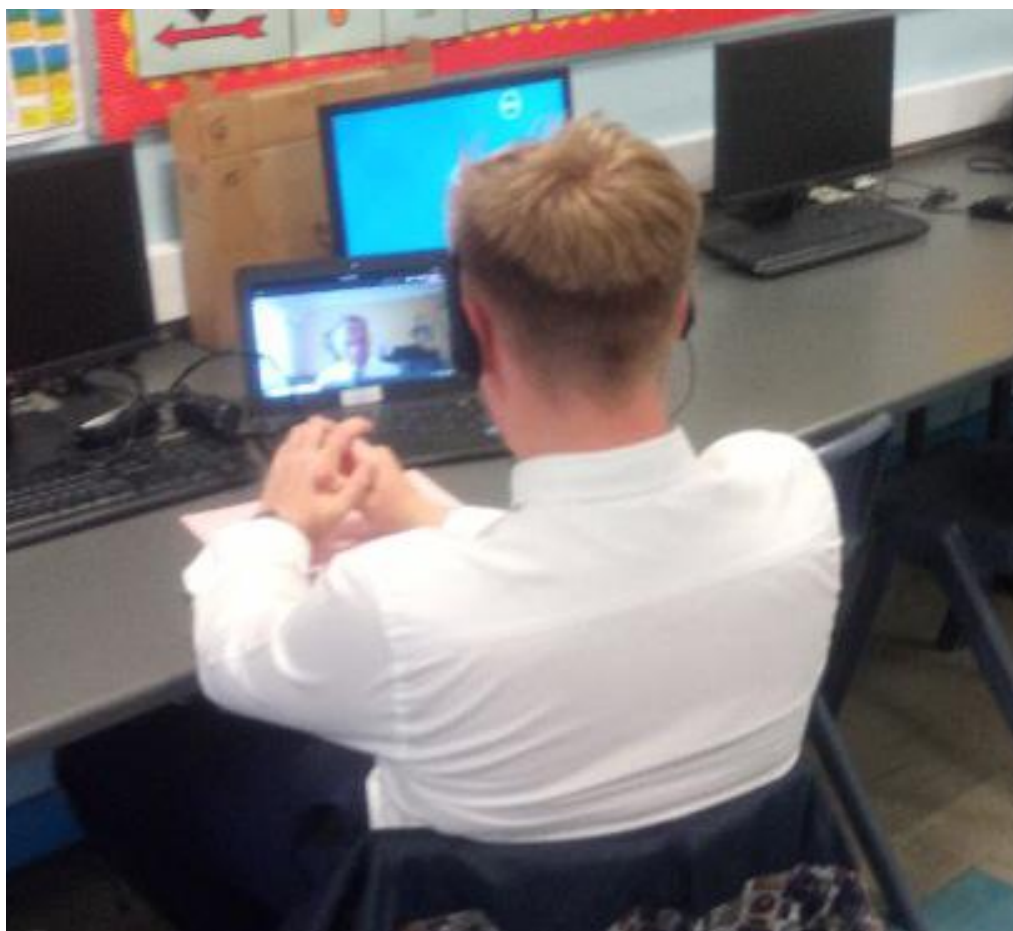
Nina Matharu, the college's sixth form welfare officer who organised the event, said: "Malcolm gave a very insightful presentation. It was great. Thank you so much."

Malcolm, who leads the club's Schools Engagement Programme, added: "For many of the students this is perhaps the first time that people other than their parents, friends or teachers see how they write and come across - in the real world spelling is important, as are sentences, paragraphs and using capital letters."

And in July about 60 more sixth-formers were given invaluable interview experience as part of the Schools Engagement programme. Over two days, Rotarians took part in online one-to-one 'mock' interviews with students from Claires Court and Altwood Schools, who were about to begin applying to university or for their first job.

Each interview took about 20 minutes and included immediate feedback. The programme also included presentations from Malcolm on creating a memorable interview and what to expect when starting your first job.

Key learning points were 'Don't



**An Altwood pupil takes part in an online 1-2-1 interview.**

turn down an invitation to lunch on your first day' and 'You only get one opportunity to make a first impression - don't waste it'.

Malcolm said: "This was another example of where our Schools Engagement Programme supports local schools in preparing their students for the real world."

"I have seen many students turn up for interview with absolutely no idea and woefully under prepared, so hopefully we have done something to give them a better than average chance."

Originally planned as face-to-face interviews, the sessions were moved online due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Gary Hope, from Claires Court Sixth Form, said: "It would've been so

very easy to cancel during these times but instead Rotary's tenacity shone through and our students truly valued their time and experience. A massive thank-you from us all."

A spokesman for Altwood School added: "Our students really benefited from the one-to-one mock interviews helping them to prepare for the world beyond school. It was an extremely successful event."

Other Rotarians taking part were Eddie Clarke, Sean Egan, Tony Hill, Martin Trepte, Mary Spinks, Gurdial Singh and Maria Scavetta.

Eddie Clarke, the Maidenhead Rotary Club's schools liaison with Altwood, said: "This is a great way of helping our secondary schools."





Whole families took part in the Bikeathon.

## Record numbers saddle up

### Nearly 250 cyclists complete Bikeathon routes aimed at every age and ability

A RECORD number of cyclists of all ages and abilities saddled up to take part in this year's Maidenhead Rotary Club Bikeathon on Sunday, July 11.

After being cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19, this year saw nearly 250 cyclists follow three different routes – a 15-mile family route, a 35-mile medium route and a 62-mile long route for serious club cyclists.

Event organiser Rotarian Sean Egan said: "We were delighted to run the Bikeathon again after its absence last year and it was great to welcome so many more families, individuals and clubs. Today represents a significant increase in numbers and hopefully we can now get some real annual traction year-on-year.

"The Bikeathon isn't a race but the three different routes cater for every level of cyclist whether they have just started cycling, wanted a fun family day out, or were looking for a serious challenge. It really is an event for everyone – our youngest cyclist was five-years-old

and even a couple of toddlers took part in ride-alongs towed by their parents."

All routes started and finished at Maidenhead Office Park in Littlewick Green. The family and the medium routes followed quiet country roads around the Walthams, Shurlock Row, Binfield and Winkfield Row, while the long route took riders over to Henley and Christmas Common, then back to Maidenhead via Sonning and Winkfield.

Staging the event is a huge undertaking for the Rotary Club, involving a small army of volunteers to signpost the routes, register entrants at the start, and man feed stations and marshal points.

Feedback from participants was resoundingly positive. One cyclist who completed the long route said: "It was fantastic - brilliantly organised and the best signposted sportive I have ever taken part in."

Proceeds are to be finalised but the event is expected to raise about £2,000 for Dementia Research UK.



Two young cyclists admire their medals.



# Rotary Matters: Bikeathon



**A family achievement.**



**Rotary president Martin Trepte presents a medal.**



**Every participant received a medal.**



**Celebrations after a long ride.**



**Rotarians register participants at the event base.**



**Ready for the off at the starting line.**





# End this plastic peril

## Scale of micro-plastics threat revealed by project ambassador

SHOCKING facts about how micro-plastics invade our bodies through our drinking water and the very air we breathe were revealed to Maidenhead Rotary Club by a guest speaker.

Brian Jonson, from Marlow Rotary Club, is an ambassador for End Plastic Soup, an international Rotary initiative with the ambitious aim of stopping plastic pollution being dumped into our seas, and waterways by 2050.

But what is plastic soup? The term covers visible bottles and other large plastic waste like carrier bags but also includes the micro-plastics which have an alarming, albeit unseen, impact on our daily lives.

Micro-plastics are found in many products from face creams, detergents and teabags to fertilizers. They are also created by tyre wear and from the release of microfibers when washing clothes.

Plastic breaks down further into tiny fragments that get into the food chain, water we drink and the air we breathe.

"I thought I was aware of the problems of plastic pollution but I had no idea of the issues of micro-plastics and the surrounding effects on our long-term health," said Bri-

an. "We each eat 2kg of plastic and breathe in 6kg of plastic dust a year. It also gets into our organs and brain through our skin."

Eight billion tons of plastic is produced every year – that's 45kg per person, and includes one million plastic bottles a minute. But only nine per cent of plastic waste is recycled. The rest is dumped in landfill or finds its way into our rivers and seas – each year eight million metric tons of plastic enters the oceans.

And it's a problem here in Maidenhead. The Thames has some of the highest recorded levels of micro plastics of any river in the world, with tiny bits of plastic found in the bodies of crabs.

"Micro plastics are one of the greatest man-made disasters of our time," said Brian.

Started in 2018 by the Rotary clubs of Amsterdam, the End Plastic Soup Campaign has now spread to Rotary clubs across the globe. It aims to harness the same energy and commitment from the world's 1.2 million Rotarians that has led to the near eradication of Polio.

Already there are End Plastic Soup projects worldwide where Rotary is leading or partnering with

other organisations. These include river and lake clean-ups but also awareness campaigns in schools and communities, plastic-free events, and international lobbying.

Brian said incentives such as the levy on carrier bags – which had cut their use by 80 per cent – plus a shift to new eco-friendly design and production methods by industry will begin to make a difference. Recycling, the capture and collection of plastic in rivers and oceans and its environmentally-friendly disposal will also contribute to reaching the 2050 target.

But most important of all: we must reduce our plastic footprint.

Brian said: "Plastic never goes away. It just gets smaller and smaller. We need to minimise our use – particularly single-use plastic. We have to reduce, redesign, reuse and recycle."

This year also sees the addition of protecting the environment as a seventh 'area of focus' for Rotary, the first time a new core objective has been added in the organisation's history. For more information about End Plastic Soup contact Rotarian Gurdial Singh, who is the club's link member for the initiative and leads our new environment group.

## 'All must play a part in climate battle'

WE all have a part to play in combatting climate change. That was the message of Cllr Donna Stimson, the Royal Borough's cabinet member for climate change and sustainability, who was guest speaker at the club earlier this year.

She outlined the council's plans to reduce carbon emissions in the borough to zero by 2050, or earlier if possible. She explained how she had personally overseen the creation of the council's environment and climate strategy, working with about 80 residents representing a broad range of views from Extinction Rebellion to property developers.

Despite having no budget to deliver the climate strategy, she was optimistic that by 'building sustainability' into council policy and people changing their behaviour, the strategy could work.

"Over 60 per cent of achieving net zero emissions is about behavioural change. All of us can make a difference," she said.

The four areas of the strategy are: Cutting waste, cutting energy use, protecting the environment, and introducing affordable and sustainable transport.

"We have got a huge hill to climb but I ask each one of you to help us."



# India's vital need for oxygen

## Club responds to call for help from Aarti Home to set up a plant in crisis-hit region

AS THE Covid pandemic swept through India, the Rotary Club of Maidenhead was just one organisation willing to send urgent help, *writes Rotarian Lyndsey Allen.*

In 2012 the club began a relationship with Aarti Home and School in Kadapa, a quarry mining town in a rural area of Southern India. The Rotary Club was impressed by the tireless work of Aarti Home in rescuing babies, girls and young women from abuse and abandonment, simply due to their gender. Aarti gives these children a home, an education and opportunities to become independent, self-supporting adults, who are now proving to be valued members of society.

Throughout the pandemic, despite having little themselves, Aarti has worked to support the local community by making hygiene-awareness banners, sanitation packs, Covid patient kits, and assembling food parcels for the most disadvantaged families.

They have made two and three-ply masks for frontline workers, while also adhering to home-schooling and supporting children, who live with their parents, but have little food and no means of learning at home.

Maidenhead Rotary Club



**Oxygen is desperately needed in India for patients with Covid.**

has been proud to support this charity, which has had an enormous impact upon the surrounding community but now, with the huge Covid wave devastating India, even more vital help is urgently needed.

Aarti, with its existing infrastructure and capabilities, is now also trying to find oxygen to save lives in the wider local area, where recorded cases have already exceeded 78,000.

Operation Oxygen Kadapa is an initiative that aims to bring Oxygen Concentra-

tors and a Pressure Swing Absorption Plant to this hard-hit region.

One hundred oxygen concentrators are currently due to be delivered and contracts for the PSA oxygen plant are being finalised, as a devastating third wave of the pandemic is, sadly, expected.

As we in Maidenhead are gradually emerging from our difficult year of Covid suffering, we are able to cautiously count our blessings. However, the alarming crisis in India is still unfolding. It is sadly impossible to eradicate

every global disaster, but when we have the means and the opportunity, we can do something to help others in great need.

Due to our longstanding connection with the Aarti charity, the Rotary Club of Maidenhead is able to safely channel funds to support Operation Oxygen Kadapa, to save lives in India.

So far the club's international committee has donated £500 with another £100 from the Theatreways project. More support from the club is expected to follow.

## Bringing home the bacon to pay Zimbabwe teachers

A PROJECT to 'bring home the bacon' to fund teachers' pay at a primary school in Zimbabwe has been made possible by Maidenhead Rotary Club.

The club's international committee has made a donation of £500 for the Chitakatira Primary School, in Mutare, to purchase a new boar and sow to re-start its pig-breeding project.

The income raised by the sale of piglets is used to cover the salaries of auxiliary teaching staff not paid by the government.

During the Covid-19 lockdown in Zimbabwe all the project's pigs, with the exception of one sow, had to be sold off.

Rotarian John Hudson, from the international committee, said: "The new pigs were delivered to Mutare last week and handed over to the school.

"The income from the project will depend on how many piglets can be raised and sold.

"The school is very grateful for our donation as it does not have sufficient funds to buy the pigs itself."

The project is run with the support of Reading-based charity Creating Better Futures which aims to break the cycle of poverty through education to give children the opportunity of a better future for themselves and their communities.



**The sow settles into her new home at the school.**



# Barry's life less ordinary

AT 85 Barry Thorne is one of the venerable elder statesmen of Maidenhead Rotary Club, best known to many as our genial weekly quizmaster.

But the adage 'everyone has a story to tell' could not be more fitting for a man whose incredible career has spanned soldier, colonial policeman, diplomat and businessman – with stints of journalist, bodyguard, 'surgeon' and sports presenter thrown in for good measure. It's also a life in Rotary, with Barry's decades of membership seeing him in far-flung clubs from Cape Town to Addis Ababa and Istanbul – as well, of course, as Maidenhead.

A born-and-bred Maidonian, Barry grew up in Grenfell Road, just opposite where he lives now. Forced to leave school at 15, he had brief forays as a clerk at High Duty Alloys in Slough, a trainee reporter with Reuters in London, and a salesman at Hepworth's in Maidenhead High Street.

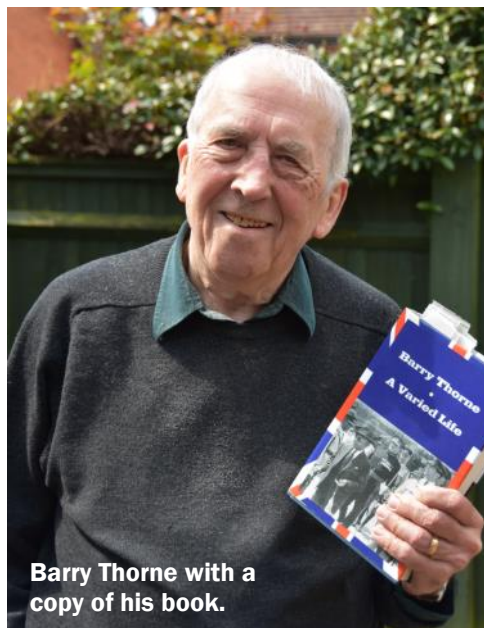
But being raised on tales of the British Raj by his grandparents from their time in India, he longed for a taste of military life overseas. So in 1952 Barry took the Queen's shilling to join the newly formed Boys Infantry Battalion. And after becoming a 'regular' soldier when he turned 18, he joined the Gloucestershire Regiment – the Glosters – with whom he was to serve for almost eight years.

The regiment was part of a 'fire brigade' ready to quickly deploy to trouble spots around the globe and Barry was to see service in places as varied as Kenya – at the time of the Mau Mau insurgency – Yemen, Cyprus, Bahrain and Germany. His military career saw him promoted to sergeant with many dramatic episodes, including being seconded to a Kenyan hospital to train as a 'field-surgeon' which was cut suddenly short by a dose of bubonic plague.

After being denied the opportunity by his CO to train as a pilot in the Army Air Corps and posted instead to the regimental depot to train recruits, Barry decided it was time to leave the army and seek adventure elsewhere.

After a short spell back in Maidenhead at his father's building firm he was accepted as an Inspector in the Colonial Police in Nyasaland, now Malawi, which required him to undergo basic constable training with the Metropolitan Police at Hendon.

Barry's police career saw him serve as a uniformed officer and then



Barry Thorne with a copy of his book.

**Everybody has a story to tell but it's fair to say Barry Thorne's life as a soldier, policeman and diplomat has been a bit more exciting than most**

in plain clothes as a Detective Inspector in Special Branch during a time of political unrest as the country moved towards independence. Following independence he acted for a short time as a personal bodyguard to new president Dr Hastings Banda before taking charge of training the next generation of the new nation's police recruits.

Always a keen sportsman, it was while still a serving police officer that Barry also became the football commentator for the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC). He went on to present a weekday 15-minute 'Sports Spotlight' radio programme and by the end of 1967 was the MBC's main English language sports presenter and commentator, juggling the role with his police duties.

With the feeling his time as a policeman was drawing to a close, in 1968 Barry began a new career with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) working mainly in commercial roles. Interspersed with periods based in London, his life as a diplomat would

see him posted to Dacca in East Pakistan, where he would witness the bloody birth of Bangladesh as a country, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Italy and finally Turkey, where he was Deputy Consul-General.

While filled with colourful adventures, Barry recalls some genuinely frightening incidents during his time as a member of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service. Among them was the evacuation of his young family from Dacca as the city descended into violence, and an emergency flight home by private jet from Addis Ababa for wife Jacqui to give birth to their daughter Juliet eight weeks early.

Rotary has played a huge part in Barry's life. A member for 44 years – though not consecutively – the first club he joined was the Rotary Club of Durban in South Africa in 1972 where he held the position of Sergeant-at-Arms, fining members for 'misdemeanours'. As well as Maidenhead and Durban, he has been a member of Rotary clubs in Addis Ababa, Milan, Colombo and Istanbul.

Barry said: "Rotary has been hugely important to me. During my time overseas in the diplomatic service, as well as all the normal things like fellowship and helping others, Rotary gave me immediate access to a network of the kind of people it was important to meet. It was a marvellous stepping stone from country to country. In my home town club the experience is more one of marvellous and ongoing friendships."

After retiring from the FCO in 1992, Barry took a 'shotgun' approach to entering the private sector, setting up a number of different businesses. He remains chairman of the most successful, ATTI Consultants, which offers debt recovery, commercial law and due diligence services through law firm associates across the world.

Looking back over his life Barry has no regrets and would not do things any differently. He said: "I had to grow up pretty fast, made my own opportunities and was prepared to put up with some pretty difficult circumstances. 'One job until I retire' was never part of my character. I've had the privilege of an amazing life that few people have experienced."

Barry's fascinating life story is chronicled in his book, *A Varied Life*, which is packed with colourful and amusing anecdotes.



# Theatreways benefits club to tune of £14,000

**Rotary theatre project winds up after 15 years due to live-streaming and Covid-19**

A ROTARY theatre project which has wound up after 15 years raised more than £14,000 for the club and other good causes during its lifetime.

Maidenhead Rotary Theatreways was set up in 2004 by Frankie Holness and Sue Robb-King, with Mike Holness doing the accounts. They organised coach trips to the National Theatre on the South Bank in London, dividing any surplus made between Maidenhead Rotary Club and other charities.

The scheme ran very successfully for many years but it gradually became more difficult to organise the trips.

A change in the National Theatre's group bookings policy meant they could no longer ensure an appropriate allocation of seats and the theatre also started to live stream performances to cinemas, including Norden Farm.

"Then with Covid-19, the National Theatre had to cancel all performances, and even had they been able to offer socially-distanced performances, it would not have been financially or practically



**Sue Robb-King and Frankie Holness who ran the Rotary Theatreways project.**

possible to offer transportation to the South Bank," explained Mike. "Given that it was also clear that these issues would remain a constraint for the foreseeable future, it was decided to close the project and donate the remaining funds to charities."

At the time of its closure the scheme had benefited Maidenhead Rotary Club by a total £14,111.17. Half of this

had been donated to the club's charity account, with the other half donated in the club's name to a total of 52 charitable organisations nominated by Frankie and Sue, including six club projects, 12 Rotary project areas, 21 local and 13 national charities.

Club President Mary Spinks said: "This was a fantastic scheme that not only brought an immense amount

of enjoyment to a lot of people but also raised a very significant amount of money for good causes in the name of Rotary. On behalf of the club I'd like to thank Frankie, Sue and Mike for all of their hard work over many years."

Frankie and Sue would like to thank the many people who regularly travelled with them over the years and made all of their good work possible.

## Remap charity makes life more accessible by design

A REPRESENTATIVE from a remarkable charity that custom makes equipment and gadgets to help disabled people live more independent lives was a guest speaker of Maidenhead Rotary Club.

Caryn Moberly, chair of Remap Berkshire, joined club members by Zoom to explain the work of the national charity, which was founded 50 years ago and has 70 branches across the UK.

A furniture maker and designer by profession, Caryn is one of Remap's volunteers who help those with disabilities or a special need by adapting exist-

ing aids or designing and making new ones tailored to their needs if there is nothing commercially available.

"We design and make the things you cannot buy," said Caryn. "They can be for any purpose – personal care, mobility, sports, hobbies, work, education and play. We do lots of things to help people with their mobility."

Examples include a counterweight system to allow an elderly woman to continue lifting the heavy lids on her Aga cooker, adapting badly fitting access ramps, a foam sink surround to let a little boy with epilepsy wash up safely

with his dad, and a brush holder to help a woman continue to paint after a stroke.

The charity's 900 skilled volunteers range from engineers and people good at DIY to designers and those with knowledge of disabilities. They complete more than 3,500 assignments each year. Funded by grants and donations, the service is free with no one excluded because of cost.

"Locally we are supported by a grant from Reading Borough Council and it is calculated that every £1 spent produces £10 worth of aid," said Caryn.



# New structure approved

Review has aimed to improve club for members and encourage more participation

CHANGES to the club's committee structure and the format of meetings were unanimously approved at the business meeting on August 2.

They are the result of a wide-ranging review of the club to improve it for members following a survey of their views.

With dissatisfaction over the quality of the food and Covid-related uncertainty over a return to Desborough Bowls Club, and Maidenhead Golf Club for our evening family meetings, a trial period of using Taplow House Hotel has been agreed.

The lunchtime meal price is £15, with a £3 fee for members who do not wish to eat to contribute to the cost of the room. While a buffet was the most popular meal suggestion in the survey this has not been possible at the hotel.

The running order of lunch meetings is to change to make better use of the time with the speaker going first, followed by the meal and club business. Club business meetings without a speaker will follow the same format with business taking place before the meal.

This means meals do not have to be rushed through before the speaker, or the speaker cut short if business has overrun. It allows members who need to return to work or who are short of time to hear the speaker, and gives plenty of time for relaxed food and fellowship.

Changes to the committees create a simpler organisational structure, reduce bureaucracy and duplication and encourage individual participation and new initiatives. More emphasis will be placed on the work of project groups with oversight provided by a reduced number of committees.

The club's activities are largely divided into fundraising, direct community activities (such as the school engagement programme and the OAP river trip) and the distribution of grants, all in line with Rotary's seven areas of focus.

As most of the project work in the club is done by small groups, the existing committees will merge into two new 'oversight panels' - 'Fundraising and Fellowship' and 'Rotary Projects'. Each will provide oversight and support to project groups which do the actual work.

'Fundraising and Fellowship' will oversee the various project groups working on public fundraising events, such as the Boundary Walk, Bikeathon and Open Gardens. Other fundraisers such as the wine quiz, and any social events such as the Quadrilateral will also report to this panel.

The 'Rotary Projects' panel will bring together the current responsibilities of the International and Community committees. It will oversee the distribution of grants in line with Rotary's seven areas

of focus and provide support and oversight for individual Rotarians and groups working on projects - such as the Aarti School, school interviews, environment and youth camp that do not have a fundraising aspect.

While the two main panels might appear to potentially have a large workload, not everything happens at once and only relevant items will be included on agendas. Also, the purpose of the panels is to provide oversight and guidance - not deliver projects themselves.

The Club Services committee will be wound up. It is now largely redundant with its work either duplicated elsewhere or easily absorbed by the club council, which will now manage the club.

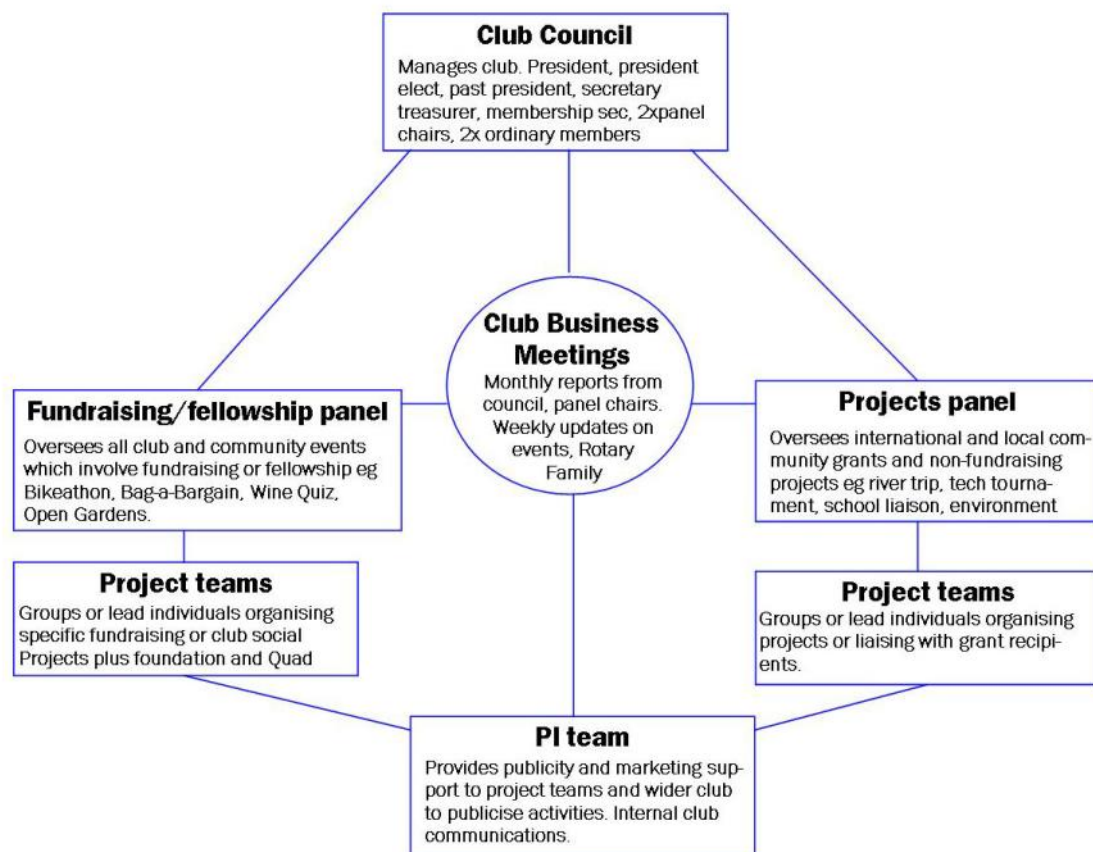
The areas of membership and speakers will move to it from club services. Council will be made up of: president, president elect, secretary, immediate past president,

treasurer, membership/speakers secretary, chair of 'Fundraising/Fellowship', chair of 'Projects', chair of Public Image, and two ordinary members, chosen by the club. For additional transparency club council meetings will be open to all members to attend as observers.

Zoom access to all meetings will also continue whenever possible. The aim is to ensure full accountability of the council to the club.

The president-elect, previously chair of club services, will become 'officer without portfolio', able to set up working groups to address particular issues if they arise. August is a transition period during which the final details of the changes will be ironed out before coming into effect from September 1.

Lack of space means this is a summary structure but full details have been sent to all members and can be found on the club Dropbox.



The new club structure



# Rotarians tour hospice

**Visitors impressed by state-of-the-art facilities and gardens supported by the club**

IN JUNE Club president Mary Spinks was given a tour of Thames Hospice to see how Rotarians have contributed to the purpose-built new facility.

Maidenhead is one of several Rotary clubs sponsoring the Family Courtyard and the Bereavement Garden at the site near Bray Lake. It has committed £2,500 of funding to the project and has previously helped to provide garden furniture for the Family Courtyard.

Mary, a former director of the Florence Nightingale Foundation who was made a CBE for a lifetime of service to nursing, was a trustee of the hospice when fundraising began for the move from its original home at Pine Lodge, Windsor.

"My visit was an emotional one, having been involved at the beginning to ensure funds were raised to build a new 28-bed hospice to replace the one in Windsor that was no longer fit for purpose," said Mary.

"Touring this beautiful new building overlooking Bray Lake convinced me it was a great success as a one-stop facility for out-patients and in-patients from the be-



**President Mary in the gardens supported by the club.**

ginning of when care is required."

Mary, who was joined on the tour by fellow Rotarians Tony and Cathie Lodge, added: "The facilities are very well designed as well as func-

tional, with the patient and family centre stage at all times. We visited the wonderful, peaceful garden to which our Rotary Club had contributed."

The new hospice, which

opened its doors in October last year, provides expert care for people living with life-limiting illnesses in East Berkshire and South Bucks.

As well as in-patient care, it offers day care, counselling, and complementary therapies while a family support team helps the children of patients.

Other facilities include an education centre for both hospice staff and care workers from other organisations, while the Palliative Community Response Team provides round-the-clock help and support to patients at home.

The site also hosts a shop and community cafe, which the public are encouraged to visit to learn more about the hospice and help raise much-needed funds.

It costs more than £10million a year to run the hospice, 49 per cent of which is met through statutory funding. The rest comes from a massive ongoing fundraising effort.

Mary added: "Anyone donating to keep this facility running can be assured their donation is very worthwhile."

To support the Hospice visit <https://thameshospice.org.uk/>

## Club programme August - October

Time	Date	Venue	Details
12.45pm	August 9	Taplow House	Speaker: Clean Conscience
12.45pm	August 16	Taplow House	Speaker: RYLA candidate
7.30pm	August 23	Taplow House	Family: Speaker - Jenny Falconer
12.45pm	September 6	TBC	Business meeting
12.45pm	September 13	TBC	Speaker: TBC
12.45pm	September 20	TBC	Job Talk: Sue Dutton
7.30pm	September 27	TBC	Family: Speaker - Sleeping
12.45pm	October 4	TBC	Business meeting
12.45pm	October 11	TBC	Speaker: TBC
12.45pm	October 18	TBC	Speaker: TBC
7.30pm	October 25	TBC	Family: Speaker - TBC

## Marshals needed for Boundary Walk

VOLUNTEERS are being sought from the club to marshal road crossings and for other duties at this year's Boundary Walk on October 3.

This year sees the 40th anniversary of event, a 14-mile sponsored walk around the boundary of the old Maidenhead borough that allows participants to raise money for their own charities. A new 5k family walk is also to be introduced this year. A large number of volunteers is always needed. If you can help please email [jim.howles@btinternet.com](mailto:jim.howles@btinternet.com)