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Rotary Matters

Maidenhead
Rotary
Club



The digital newspaper for Maidenhead Rotary Club - no.1 Feb 2021

Gardens wanted



President Mary Spinks and Open Gardens project leader Janet Perry at the launch of the scheme.
Photo: Maria Scavetta/Photogica

INTERESTING gardens of all shapes and sizes are still being sought for the club's Open Gardens weekend in aid of charity this summer.

Planning for the event, due to run over three days from Friday, June 25 to Sunday, June 27, is still going ahead in anticipation of lockdown restriction being eased by the.

It will raise money for dementia research and other Rotary charities. The organising team wants to hear from owners of gardens large and small, new or well-established and hope to include places of interest around Maidenhead that might never before have been open to the public.

The aim is to engage with as much of the community as possible. Nearer the time advance tickets will be available online and from Braywick Heath

Maidenhead Rotary Club
OPEN GARDENS
25-27 June 2021

Nursery which has already agreed to be involved.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to bring people together, especially those who have found spending time outdoors in their garden good for their wellbeing during a year of lockdown and isolation," said Rotary Club President, Mary Spinks.

Janet Perry, one of the event's organisers, added: "We hope owners will want to open their gardens and to exchange ideas with like-minded keen gardeners, and for all visitors to have an enjoyable weekend discovering more about some of Maidenhead's secret gardens hidden away behind garden walls and gates."

Some gardens will also be showcasing the work of artists and hosting stalls selling refreshments, cream teas, plants and books in aid of Rotary charities

"At this stage we are asking owners who are interested in opening their gardens to contact us," said Janet. "So please get in touch if you want to open your garden or spread the word among those who might be interested."

To find out more email: contact@maidenheadopengardens.org

Website: www.maidenheadrotary.co.uk Facebook: Rotary Club of Maidenhead Twitter: @MHeadRotary

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Words and design: Martin Trepte
Photography: Maria Scavetta
Contact: martintrepte23@gmail.com

A word from the club president



AT A time when our normal means of communication and socialising are denied us, I am sure like me, that you will welcome this digital newspaper.

In spite of our situation, our Club is carrying on in innovative ways.

Please enjoy reading this first edition and if there are subjects you wish to raise or share with others, please contact our editor, Martin, who will be delighted to hear from you.

It would be nice to have a letters page in future editions, for example. The Talking Point article on p17 raises some interesting questions members may want to express views on.

President Mary

WELCOME to the first issue of Rotary Matters, a new digital newspaper for the Rotary Club of Maidenhead.

The public image committee is busy publishing news about the club on our website, social media and - if they have space - in the Maidenhead Advertiser.

But, especially while we're under lockdown, I'm very conscious that not all members want, or are able, to attend Zoom meetings. And not everyone looks at the website or is on Facebook or Twitter.

So, there's a good chance at least a few of our members have missed out on some of what the club has been up to.

To remedy this situation we've put together this newspaper as a digest containing the news we've published about the club over the past few months. Many of you will be familiar with much of it, but

I'm sure there's something new in here for everyone.

Putting it together has also been a great reminder that, despite the restrictions of lockdown, we have still achieved a tremendous amount in the past few months - both in our own community and internationally. It just goes to show what can be done with a little bit of ingenuity and determination in the face of adversity. This first edition is in PDF format so it can be shared to the whole club by email. But again, if you have trouble reading or accessing it, let me know and I'm sure we can print out a paper copy.

It's also a great advert for the club, so please feel free to share it with others interested in finding out about Rotary.

Stay safe everyone.

Martin

It's your chance to lead the club

Members invited to take on presidency for 2021-22

AS MANY members will be aware, the club now has a vacancy for the position of president elect for the rest of this Rotary year, who will then assume the role of president in July for the Rotary year 2021-22.

All members of the club are invited to put themselves forward for the position. It's a great opportunity to lead the club, help shape its direction, use your existing skills and develop new ones. But what exactly does being president involve? Thankfully, we have a handy 'job description' outlining what is required. The presidents will:

- Be a 'visionary' and represent the club externally and to other organisations to help promote the club and take it forward to meet and develop its goals.
- Sustain and grow the club's membership.
- Implement successful projects that address the needs of our community and those in other countries.
- Support The Rotary Foun-

dation through both programme participation and financial contributions.

- Help develop future leaders capable of serving in Rotary beyond the club level.
- Implement and continually evaluate the club's goals for their year in office, ensuring all club members are involved and informed.
- Ensure each committee has defined goals, encourage communication between committee chairs and conduct periodic reviews of committee activities, goals, and expenditure.
- Develop and set annual goals aligned with the club's long-range goals.

At first glance this may seem a bit daunting. But remember, the president is supported by both the president elect and the chairmen of the committees, where much of the work is done, not to mention individual club members.

Current president Mary Spinks explained: "As president, one comes to appreci-

ate fully the great work done by Rotarians through our committees by monitoring and sharing the many initiatives and events taking place.

"In this unusual time, we have adapted to new technology like Zoom, looked at addressing present day needs such as loneliness, helped pupils with recycled laptops and online job interviews, and recognised our Covid-19 Heroes. We continue to plan for the future so we have a fundraising programme to ensure we have the funds we need and we are updating our recruitment information to make certain we attract new members.

"It is a great honour to lead such a progressive club and there is plenty of support and help from the committee chairs and other members of the club, many of whom have been past presidents themselves."

"If you are interested please speak to President Mary who will be happy to talk about this important role by February 28.

Foodbank donation boost for families

CHRISTMAS was less of a struggle for families finding it hard to make ends meet this year thanks to Maidenhead Rotary Club.

With its annual Christmas party for those in need cancelled due to the Covid-19 lockdown, the club has instead made a £600 donation to the charity Maidenhead Foodshare, which will be used to help struggling families over the festive period.

Rotarian Jim Howles, chairman of the club's community committee, said it was essential to find ways to continue to support those in need despite the pandemic. We normally host a party at Christmas or early in the New Year for selected people who are lonely or struggling.

We have been unable to do that this year because of the Covid-19 restrictions so this is our alternative," he said.



The donation helped struggling families over the Christmas period.

Presents for homeless

Joint project with Lions to support rough sleepers at Christmas



HOMELESS people in Maidenhead and Windsor received some seasonal good cheer thanks to a joint initiative by two of the borough's service organisations.

Maidenhead Rotary Club and Maidenhead Lions Club teamed up to provide 24 bags packed with fun and practical items ranging from socks and toothpaste to chocolate Santas and a wind-up radio which doubles as a torch and phone charger.

Rotarian Eddie Piekut, who is also a volunteer for the RBWM Primary Care Service for the Homeless, said; "If I was on the street I would be really chuffed to get one of these bags. It would give me a real lift to think that someone was thinking about me this Christmas."

He added: "It's great to be part of the borough's approach to the homeless.

"The Primary Care Service is quietly piloting a project to counsel some of our local rough sleepers, to develop their self-esteem and help get them back into the mainstream."

Photo: Eddie Piekut and Lions' President Karen Brown.

Grant provides toys for children in refuges

THE FESTIVE season was a little bit brighter for families living in women's refuges thanks to a donation from the club to provide them with new toys to open on Christmas Day.

Most children arrive at a refuge with just the clothes on their back and their mothers struggle to provide basic essentials, let alone toys at Christmas.

So the club gave £1,000 to the KidsOut Rotary Christmas Toy Box Initiative 'Every Refuge, every Child'. It provides new toys to support mental health and make the world a little kinder for children spending Christmas in a refuge.

KidsOut is a Rotary charity, started by Rotary and run by Rotarians, that aims to bring a bit of fun and happiness into the lives of disadvantaged children. Chief executive Gordon Moulds said the toys were given to mums first so they could then give them 'from Santa' and not from charity – vital for a mother's self-esteem.

He added: "This £1,000 donation is a wonderful contribution. Your support has made a real difference to some of the most disadvantaged children in your area, bringing some joy when they need it most."

A refuge support worker said the toy box initiative helps ease the stress on mums struggling to give their children presents to open on Christmas morning. She said: "Your toys meant we could provide families with the opportunity to have a lovely Christmas Day."

Jim Howles, chairman of the community committee, said they really wanted to support the KidsOut initiative at a particularly tough time for families living in refuges.

"We have had great support from KidsOut for many years. They have always supported our day trips for local schools with monetary assistance and help with subsidised tickets for theme parks. The committee agreed with me that it would be nice to give something back," he said.

Honouring those who put service above self

A NEIGHBOUR who offered support to every house in her street, a business owner who provided thousands of meals for NHS workers, and the entire staff of the intensive care unit at Wexham Park Hospital are just some of those honoured in the Maidenhead Rotary Club Covid-19 Heroes Awards.

The club asked the public to nominate people in the Maidenhead area who had gone over and above the call of duty during the first stage of the Covid-19 pandemic, in five categories covering hospital workers to community volunteers.

Almost 200 people responded, nominating more than 30 people or groups they thought had gone the extra mile to help others. A judging panel including Rotary president Mary Spinks and Maidenhead MP Theresa May had the tough job of selecting the winners.

The awards were the idea of President Mary, who had a 52-year career in nursing and is a former director of the Florence Nightingale Foundation which supports nurses.

Originally the aim of the scheme was to give £100 to the five category winners but Mary decided to double the

With so many going the extra mile to help others during the first lockdown, club president Mary Spinks came up with the idea of Rotary awards to recognise the selflessness of the true community heroes willing to support not just their neighbours but complete strangers too

fund so others could be recognised with £50 runner-up awards.

She said: "The entries showed the incredible community spirit and selflessness of so many people willing to go out of their way to help not just neighbours but complete strangers.

"It was a very difficult judging experience but also a great privilege to be able to offer a small token of our appreciation for what they had done, and in many cases, continue to do."

Among the category winners was community volunteer Alice Lewthwaite from Oaken Grove, who contacted every

one of the 84 houses in her road to offer help and support to those in need. Most residents did not know her before the pandemic and judges said her actions summed up the very spirit of the awards.

The Open category was won by Shilpam Bidasaria, owner of Desi Flavorz, who supplied thousands of cooked vegetarian meals to NHS doctors and nurses at seven hospitals, as well as supporting GP surgeries and Maidenhead Foodbank.

'Thanks to Rotary for doing this because it's really important we recognise the contribution everyone has made'
— Theresa May, MP

The whole staff of Wexham Park Hospital's intensive care unit will share a special award of £200 for their unfailing resilience and endurance during the pandemic.

President Mary said: "It is difficult to comprehend the pressure and emotions of ICU staff who have to cope with patients, isolated from loved ones, and aware that they could die from this terrible virus.

"Unfortunately, in spite of all their efforts, many died leaving staff to deal
Story continues on next page



Ana Coelho, clinical matron of Wexham Park ICU, receives an award on behalf of her colleagues from Maidenhead MP Theresa May and Rotary president Mary Spinks. (Pictures: Maria Scavetta/Photogia)

Continued from previous page
with the never ending and draining experience of loss and sadness.”

Ana Coelho, clinical matron at the Intensive Care Unit, received the award on behalf of her colleagues.

She said: “The Wexham Park ICU team is very grateful for receiving such acknowledgment. Despite the challenges we are still facing, it is comforting to see how fantastic goodwill and mutual support continues to encourage us to achieve what we now look back on as small miracles.

“Thank you Maidenhead Rotary Club, we are very proud and humbled to be regarded as heroes. We look forward to celebrating, in a safe future, by enjoying the privilege of this recognition.”

Miriam Blazey, manager of Elizabeth House in Cookham, won the Community Health Worker category for her support of the Cookham SOS community hub, based at the centre.

And the Care Home Category award went to Craig Thorne at Thames Hospice who worked solidly throughout the pandemic, including extra shifts to ensure the new hospice opened on time.

Theresa May said of the awards: “I was really impressed by the nominations. Everyone who was nominated had gone over and above the call of duty in sup-



Clinical matron of Wexham Park ICU Ana Coelho with the award for her team.

porting their local community and judging them was very difficult.

“But what this shows is what a fantastic local community we have of people willing to help their neighbours in such difficult times. Thanks to Rotary for doing this because it’s really important that we recognise the contribution that everyone has made.”

Everyone nominated who did not win a prize receives a Rotary service recognition certificate from the club.

Our Covid-19 Heroes Award winners in full

Winners (£100 prize):

Hospital Worker – Wexham Park ICU (£200 special award)

Open Category – Shilpam Bidasaria
Community volunteer – Alice Lewthwaite

Care Home Worker – Craig Thorne
Community Health Worker – Miriam Blazey

Runners-up (£50 prize):

Andrew Sutherland, 1st Cookham Scouts

Maidenhead Mosque

Kirsty Clark, Holyport Cares

Kirsty Buckland, Holyport Cares

Ian Davis, Cookham SOS

Jenny Wyeth, Wexham Park Hospital

Nette Pescador, Wexham Park Hospital

Karen Jones

Service recognition certificate:

Brian Dixon

Project Wingman

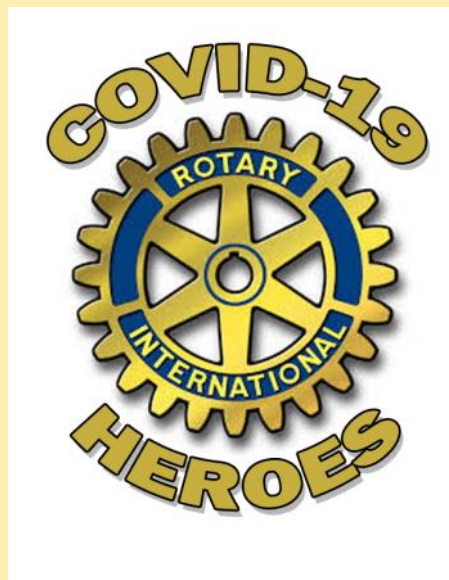
Helen Beveridge

Lois Clark

Emma Kennedy

Tara Bower

Justine Lewin



Shivs Aulack

Nikki Kitt

Jane Boulter

Amy Lovel

Bourne End & Wooburn SOS

People to Places

Jacoby Patterson

Alison Major

Rotary volunteer response project back in action for latest lockdown

WITH the country now in its third lockdown The Rotary Volunteer Response Project has once again swung into action to support vulnerable and isolating households.

The initiative was the brainchild of Lisa Hunter from the Maidenhead Bridge Club and launched just before the country went into the first lockdown in March.

Lisa gave an update to the club in the autumn, before the latest restrictions were imposed. At that time more than 140 households in Maidenhead had been supported thanks to the initiative which mobilised 120 volunteers, many of them non-Rotarians.

The aim is to help vulnerable people in the community who were isolating.

Volunteers did vital tasks such as shopping, prescription collection, posting mail, dog walking or even just being there for a chat on the phone.

The project is supported by all of the town’s Rotary Clubs.

In her autumn update Lisa reported 850 errands had been run – taking up 950 volunteer hours. One of the most significant contributions of the project was a weekly provision of food parcels to 23 families whose children were missing out on free school meals due to schools being shut.

The Rotary Club of Maidenhead had donated £4,500 to the project - £1,500 from its own funds and £1,500 each from grants received from the Prince Philip Trust and Rotary District.

Lisa is expected to give a new update on the project at the joint meeting of Maidenhead’s three Rotary clubs and Rotaract club hosted by Maidenhead Bridge on Sunday, February 21 at 10.30am, by Zoom.

• Members of all of the town’s Rotary clubs have also been volunteering as marshals at the Covid-19 vaccination centre at the town hall.



Foundation explained

The Rotary Foundation is more than a monthly prize draw – it's a literal lifesaver

FOR MANY people in the club the phrase 'Rotary Foundation' means the chance to win £50 in a monthly draw and a couple of bigger prizes at Christmas.

But the Rotary Foundation is so much more – it is Rotary's very own charity that has been in operation for more than 100 years. And the prize draw is simply our club's unique way of funding our annual contribution to it.

Since it was started in 1917, the Rotary Foundation has spent more than \$4billion on life-changing and sustainable projects around the world. Its mission is 'to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty'.

In the 2018-19 financial year alone it has made grants of \$86m including:

- \$11m in education, including \$7m in educational scholarships supporting future leaders and influencers
- \$18m on projects to provide clean water \$7m on initiatives dedicated to saving mothers and children
- \$35m on disease prevention and treatment, much of which is devoted to eradicating polio. Since 1988 Rotary has raised \$2.1 billion for the polio campaign.
- The Foundation also supports a wide range of youth projects, peace fellowships, youth leadership awards and youth exchanges.



In 2018-19 alone the Rotary Foundation spent \$18m on projects to provide clean water.

As well as international projects the Foundation supports clubs in their own projects through district grants, with match funding of £1,500 available.

Eligibility is subject to Foundation contributions and in the current Rotary

year our club has received £1,500 for the Rotary in Maidenhead Covid-19 charity. Previous grants have helped fund our youth camp and Kids Out projects.

So, how is the Rotary Foundation funded?

The club pays an annual contribution to Rotary International of \$100 per member. This year's precept at our current membership and exchange rate is approximately £3,560.

"This is part-funded by our Foundation Draw tickets with the balance coming from the club's Charity Account and additional voluntary contributions made by some Sustaining Members," explains Eddie Clarke, who oversees the draw.

"As the Foundation is our own charity, members decided many years ago to run the monthly draw to raise the money rather than take our precept from the Charity Account."

Tickets cost £30 each for the year, which starts every January. A draw is made every month for £50 and in December there are additional prizes of £100 and £200.

But while the draw originally covered the whole precept, currently net proceeds after prizes stand at £2,550, meaning a £1,010 contribution is needed from the clubs' Charity Account.

To reduce the shortfall the club is encouraging new members to take part in the draw and also asking members to buy more tickets. To buy your tickets please contact Rotarian Eddie Clarke.

President Mary lays Remembrance wreath for club

PRESIDENT Mary Spinks laid the wreath on behalf of the Rotary Club of Maidenhead at the annual Remembrance Sunday service at the war memorial outside the town hall in November.

Mary joined representatives from Maidenhead Thames and Maidenhead Bridge Rotary Clubs along with the Mayor, Vice Lord Lieutenant and representatives of the British Legion and other voluntary organisations for the socially-distanced service.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions there was no parade this year but a bugler from the Salvation Ar-

my played the Last Post and Reveille, and participants were able to join in singing a hymn and the national anthem.

Mary said: "It was a great privilege to lay the wreath on behalf of all members of Maidenhead Rotary Club at the war memorial at the town hall.

"In remembering those who gave their lives for us, it brought to mind the hope of those left behind for a better world."

She added: "In a minor way, we need to be hopeful that we will survive the difficult times we live in and remain positive for the future."





Steve Boucher, landlord of 15 Queen Street, and president Mary with some of the lunches for struggling families.

Putting food on the table

‘Being in Rotary empowers you to get more value from what you do’ - Harry Patel

MAIDENHEAD Rotary Club backed a scheme from one of its members to help feed struggling families over the October half-term holiday.

Rotarian Harry Patel, who runs Gourmet Chicken based at the Maiden's Head in Maidenhead High Street, the pub's managers Lee Wright and Jo Sharp, and Steve Boucher, landlord of the nearby 15 Queen Street pub, teamed up after they heard children would go hungry during the school break.

Together they provided cooked lunches and evening meals every day during half-term week for 15 families identified by Maidenhead Foodshare. In addition they donated food parcels containing hundreds of meals to be distributed by the local charity.

Maidenhead Rotary Club donated £250 towards the costs of the project.

Harry said: "By providing lunches, dinners and food parcels we are covering three bases, not just one.

"It's not just about feeding the

kids, parents need to eat properly too. I'm really grateful to the Rotary Club for supporting the scheme and enabling us to reach more people."

He added: "Being in Rotary empowers you to get more value from what you do."

Club president Mary Spinks said: "We were delighted to get behind such an initiative involving one of our own Rotarians that directly helps some of the most vulnerable people in our community at such a difficult time. The businesses involved have all been affected by the Covid-19 lockdown themselves - yet are still prepared to step up to help those in need."

Lee Wright, manager of the Maidens Head, added: "We've got a little girl and the thought of children like her going hungry was terrible. I don't think people realise the scale of the problem - some of the families we are helping are unable even to cook.

"What we are doing is not going to change the world but we can still make a difference."



Rotarian Harry Patel, who runs Gourmet Chicken.

Milestone as Africa declared Polio-free

Thanks to a 30-year campaign by Rotary Polio is now endemic in just two countries



The picture that says it all.

ROTARIANS in Maidenhead who have supported the global effort to eradicate polio welcomed the news in October that Africa was finally free from the disease.

The World Health Organization (WHO) officially certified the Africa region wild polio-free. Polio is a debilitating disease mainly affecting children. It can cause paralysis and even death.

The milestone is the result of decades of effort from Rotary clubs and volunteers around the world, who have fundraised, campaigned and worked tirelessly since Rotary pledged to rid the world of polio more than 30 years ago.

Members of the Rotary Club of Maidenhead have been at the forefront of the battle at every level. For years they have worked to raise funds for mass vaccinations and even provided volunteers to help in immunisation programmes abroad.

Rotarian Mike Holness, who volunteered to help deliver immunisation programmes in India in 2004 and 2011, welcomed the news Africa was wild-polio free.

"It's great news. It will make an enormous difference to countless lives.

But it reminds us that we cannot relax our commitment in the battle against polio any more than we can relax against the current Covid-19 virus in the UK," he said.

The certification comes four years after Nigeria, the last polio-endemic country in Africa, recorded its final case of wild polio.

It means of the WHO's six regions, five – accounting for 90 per cent of the world's population – are free from polio.

Globally, more than 2.5 billion children have been protected against the disease, which has reduced the number of cases by 99.9 per cent - down from about 1,000 cases per day in 125 countries.

Club president Mary Spinks said: "This is a terrific landmark in the battle to eradicate polio.

Although it has been many years since polio has been present in the UK and Ireland, we are proud to have contributed to the global efforts to eliminate the disease for good."

For Mary the spectre of polio is very real. She vividly recalls an outbreak in her home city of Cork, Ireland,

in 1956 when she was a schoolgirl. She said: "The city became a ghost town. Everybody was terrified of catching it and it almost ruined my father's business which was in the city centre.

"It was a terrible time."

Mary continued: "We remain committed to making a polio-free world a reality. If we don't finish the job, it is estimated that within 10 years, as many as 200,000 children annually all over the world could succumb to polio, including here in the UK.

"The virus can literally be a plane ride away so vaccination is vital."

Despite the significant milestone being reached, the job to fully rid the world of polio goes on, as the virus continues to circulate in parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Vaccination programmes must continue to protect every last child and strengthen routine immunisation to keep immunity levels high, so the virus does not return.

Rotary has directly contributed more than US\$2 billion to ending polio since 1985, including thousands of pounds raised by Rotarians in Maidenhead.



Mike and Frankie Holness pictured administering the Polio vaccine to babies in India as volunteers for Rotary.

Dispatch from the frontline

A FIRST-hand account of the battle to eradicate polio was given to the club by Rotarian Mile Holness, who has twice travelled to India with his wife Frankie to help with mass immunisation programmes.

Club member Mike was speaking at the Monday night meeting in advance of World Polio Day, on Saturday, October 24, which marked Rotary's more than 30-year global battle to eradicate the disease.

Mike explained that up until the 1950s, when the first vaccine was introduced, the UK alone had seen 8,000 cases a year.

And while an oral vaccine has been available since 1962, when Rotary declared its ambition to rid the world of polio in 1987 there were still 1,000 cases per day in 125 countries.

Since then, thanks to Rotary working alongside the World Health organisation and charities such as the Gates Foundation, cases have fallen by 99.9 per cent.

More than 2.5 billion children have been protected against the disease, which is now endemic in just Afghanistan and Pakistan with just 102 cases this year. And out of the original three strains of the polio virus, only one now still exists.

While Rotary has directly contributed more than \$2 billion to ending polio, Rotarians have done much more than just raise money.

Clubs across the globe have been at the forefront of the battle, with volunteers on the ground working alongside health work-

Rotary club member Mike Holness recalls his personal experiences in the battle against Polio as a volunteer at two special immunisation days in India

ers to run immunisation programmes in some of the world's poorest places.

Mike and Frankie volunteered in India in 2004 and again in 2011, helping vaccinate children in National Immunisation Days (NIDs) co-ordinated by local Rotary clubs. The first time they helped in the slums of Delhi and the second in an isolated village outside the capital.

Mike said: "The idea is to flood the country with the vaccine, which was described as 'two drops of life' for the two drops of vaccine given to each child. In 2004 166 million children were vaccinated at 1.1 million vaccination points by 2.3 million volunteers.

He explained a huge publicity drive takes place before each NID to encourage parents to bring their children to be vaccinated. After vaccination each child's fin-

ger is marked with purple ink which lasts for a month, making it easier for health workers to spot children who have not been treated.

"No child is safe until all children are safe," said Mike.

He described the dignity of local people despite the poverty they lived in, their patience while waiting in long queues for vaccination, and the commitment of local volunteers who took unpaid leave to help.

Mike explained once a country was free of polio continued immunity should be managed through the normal processes of infant immunisations after birth, followed by a booster at five years age.

But this depended on the quality of local health services and the threat of large-scale infections from other infected areas, which would likely require Regional Immunisation Days in response.

In the case of India, which was declared free of polio in 2015, a full National Immunisation Day was carried out in January 2020 year due to the threat of cases from neighbouring Pakistan.

The battle against polio can also be dangerous. Mike said 25 health workers had been shot in places like Pakistan where they were sometimes viewed with suspicion.

But he also said there had been 'Days of Tranquillity' in trouble spots around the world, where bodies such as UNICEF had arranged ceasefires to allow for immunisation days to be held.



Club members busy at the crocus planting.

Town's three Rotary clubs plant 7,000 crocuses for Polio Day

MAIDENHEAD Rotarians planted more than 7,000 crocus bulbs across the town to mark World Polio Day, on Saturday, October 24, and highlight the organisation's ongoing battle to eradicate the disease.

The weekend saw about 30 volunteers from the town's three Rotary Clubs – Maidenhead, Maidenhead Thames and Maidenhead Bridge – planted bulbs in parks and along roadside verges as part of the Purple4Polio campaign.

In the spring these areas will be carpeted with purple flowers to represent the purple ink used to mark the fingers of children vaccinated in Rotary's 30-year global campaign to end polio, which has seen the number of cases fall by 99.9 per cent.

Once a worldwide scourge with 1,000 cases per day in 125 countries, more than 2.5 billion children have been protected against the disease which is now endemic in just Afghanistan and Pakistan. This

year saw a significant milestone in the battle when Africa was certified polio-free.

The crocuses were planted outside Maidenhead Library, at the Sir Nicholas Winton Memorial Garden in Oaken Grove Park, at Bridge Gardens by the River Thames, and alongside the A308 in Furze Platt and the A4 near Maidenhead Thicket.

Project coordinators Nisha Chettri and Harrie Hayward said: "Rotary in Maidenhead's polio crocus planting saw more than 30 volunteers from the three Rotary clubs working together to plant thousands of bulbs to celebrate World Polio Day and highlight the important work we're doing to eradicate this disease from the planet.

We can't wait to see the purple flowers bloom in the spring, sharing an important message with residents and bringing a splash of colour too."



Rotarians from the town's three clubs took part.

Club thanked for being one of first aboard appeal to keep centre afloat

NORDEN Farm Centre for the Arts has thanked Maidenhead Rotary Club for being among the first to respond to its appeal for funds to keep going in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The club pledged £1,000 to the Norden's Ark Appeal, which aims to raise £50,000 to offset the impact of the lockdowns and help the centre continue its programme of virtual activities which have provided a lifeline for many who are isolating due to the virus.

A special funding fortnight held to launch the appeal in November raised nearly £13,000 towards the target.

Norden Farm chief executive Jane Corry said: "Thank you to The Rotary Club of Maidenhead for supporting Norden Farm's campaign with an



President Mary with Norden Farm trustee Nick Winton and chief executive Jane Corry.

early pledge of £1,000, and also for introductions to other potential pledgers and publicity in the Maidenhead Advertiser and on the club's website.

"Appeal funds are already being used to produce programming in virtual and socially-distanced live formats, so we can continue catering for all of our audiences no matter what restrictions are in place."

Rotary club president Mary Spinks said: "I am delighted we have supported Norden Farm.

"The centre is a great community asset enjoyed by many people and it must survive during these awful times. I hope many others will follow our example as the arts are vital to the wellbeing of so many people."

For more information about the Norden's Ark Appeal see <https://norden.farm/pages/norden-s-ark-appeal>

Insight into Rotary scholarship scheme

Fantastic opportunity that allows young students to study around the world

A FASCINATING insight into a Rotary scheme that helps students pursue their studies around the world was given to the club at one of its Monday meetings.

The guest speaker was Danielle Perro, who is being sponsored under the Rotary Scholarship Scheme to complete a doctorate in women's reproductive health at Oxford University.

The scheme provides grants to support graduate students studying abroad in areas relating to one of six key Rotary causes: promoting peace; fighting disease; providing clean water; saving mothers and children; supporting education; and growing local economies.

Danielle was awarded her scholarship through her local Rotary Club in Orangeville, Ontario in Western Canada, and is also supported by a host Rotary Club in Oxford.

The scholarship is funding her to conduct world-leading research into the cause, diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis – a condition that affects up to

10 per cent of women and can lead to chronic pain and even infertility. It takes years to diagnose and there is currently no cure.

Danielle said: "I am passionate about improving women's health and while studying in Canada realised no one had the answers about endometriosis. So I looked around at who was at the forefront of research and that was in Oxford.

"One of the areas covered by the Rotary Scholarship Scheme is 'fighting disease' so I applied, went through the selection process and was successful. The scheme offers incredible opportunities. As well as covering my tuition fees, it has opened the door to more funding and allowed me to get involved in other Rotary activities."

Thanking Danielle, Rotarian Eddie Clarke said her fascinating talk highlighted the value and importance of the scholarship scheme in allowing young students the opportunity to study around the world.



Rotary scholar Danielle Perro

Jo shows Blind Club members they are not forgotten

ROTARIANS helped a charity for the visually impaired in the Royal Borough play Santa to ensure its members did not miss out on seasonal goodwill at Christmas.

Maidenhead and Windsor Vision provided shoe boxes filled with treats to its 110 members in Maidenhead, Windsor, Ascot and Binfield. And each member also enjoyed a home delivered Christmas meal cooked by Chris Burns Catering, which has served up lunches at the club's monthly meetings at SportsAble since the millennium.

The parcels - packed with biscuits, sweets, toiletries and items like hand sanitiser and Christmas cards - will be delivered by the charity's team of more than 40 volunteers, many



Maidenhead and Windsor Vision president Jo Ayre with the boxes of Christmas presents for members. Photo: Maria Scavetta/Photogia

of whom come from Maidenhead Rotary Club and Maidenhead Thames Rotary Club.

With Maidenhead and

Windsor Vision closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown has been hard for many of its more vulnerable mem-

bers who have been forced to isolate.

President Jo Ayre - a member of our Rotary family - has phoned every member once a fortnight to check on them and provide essential contact.

She said: "It has been a very difficult time for our members and they really appreciated the phone calls and, gifts and Christmas meal. We really wanted to show them how much we are thinking of them."

Jo also thanked financial supporters, including the Louis Baylis (Maidenhead Advertiser) Charitable Trust and the Shanly Foundation, for funding.

"We could not do this without the help of our wonderful volunteers," she said.

‘Bubble’ Boundary Walk beats Covid-19



Maidenhead MP Theresa May and her husband Philip joined Rotarians for the official start of the Boundary Walk.

THE 2020 Rotary Boundary Walk, which took place in a new ‘Bubble’ format due to Covid-19 restrictions, was declared to have been a resounding success by organisers.

Nearly 200 people took part in the 12-mile charity sponsored walk over three weeks in October, raising about £7,000 for a range of good causes.

The event takes its name from the tradition of ‘beating the bounds’ - an annual walk around the boundary of the old Maidenhead Borough – and follows the same route.

Usually it sees about 600 participants

Safe lockdown-friendly format sees 200 walkers raise about £7,000 for charities starved of cash by pandemic

setting out on a single Sunday in October to walk a fully marshalled route with check-points and road crossings manned by Rotari-



Maidenhead Rotary Club president Mary Spinks steps out at the official start of this year’s event.

ans.

But this year, due to social distancing rules, walkers were given a three-week window to complete a non-marshalled route in ‘bubbles’ of up to six people, such as families or charity groups.

“We were absolutely delighted with how the ‘Bubble’ format worked,” said organising committee chairman Jim Howles.

“With the Boundary Walk impossible to run in the normal way, having 200 people still take part and raise so much money for charity in such a difficult year is a fantastic result.

“Lots of charities rely on it as a major fundraiser and we were determined to find a way for it to go ahead despite the restrictions.

“We’d like to say a huge thank-you to all the walkers who took part and to the Louis Baylis Trust and Shanly Foundation for their support.”

The Boundary Walk is jointly organised by a team of Rotarians from Maidenhead Rotary Club and Maidenhead Bridge Rotary Club.

They hope that by next year it will be able to return in its usual format but are thinking about introducing a longer window for walkers who are unable to take part in the main event.

More Boundary Walk photos on the following page.



Hikers from Maidenhead Bridge Rotary Club on the walk.

Rotary Matters: Boundary Walk in pictures



Rotarian Gurdip Bahra and his family walked in separate bubbles in aid of eye and dental projects abroad.



Rotarian Sean Egan and wife Pippa raised money for dementia care.



Walkers from the Alzheimer's Society on Battlemead Common.



Supporters of Norden Farm braved a rainy day to take part in the Boundary Walk.



Members of Maidenhead Athletic Club take a breather along the route in Malters Lane.

Quake-hit school chosen as 2022 ‘Quad’ project

Plan to help reconstruct buildings devastated by 2015 natural disaster in Nepal

THE reconstruction of a Nepali primary school badly damaged in a devastating earthquake has been chosen as Maidenhead Rotary Club’s Quadrilateral Project for 2022.

The Shree Saurpani School is in the rugged and inaccessible Gorkha Himalayan region, the area at the epicentre of a massive earthquake that shook the region in 2015.

Its buildings were so badly damaged they could no longer be used and the school is still recovering from the disaster.

With the support of the Rotary clubs of Kopundol in Nepal, and Farringdon in the UK, a modern classroom block and toilets have now been built.

But student numbers are down from 200 before the earthquake to 108, with a staff of seven teachers.

At its November business meeting, the club agreed to adopt the next phase of the school redevelopment as its special project for when it hosts the 2022 Quadrilateral – an annual gathering of the twinned Rotary clubs of Maidenhead, Tivoli, Bonn and St Cloud hosted by each club in turn.

International committee chairman Graham Brunsden said: “We will be involved in supporting phase two of the regeneration plan - which includes IT training, English



A new classroom block was the first phase of reconstruction at the Shree Saurpani Primary School.

and adult literacy, and a library upgrade - working with the local Kopundol Rotary club and the Farringdon club.

“We will eventually have 8000 euros at our disposal from the Quadrilateral fund, but we will start contributing to the project at the beginning of 2021 as the people on the ground are anxious to start the comple-

tion of this phase and reap the benefits.”

Graham added: “We have been aware of this project for some time. It is well run, stewarded by the local Rotary club and is subject to ongoing scrutiny.”

The club’s liaison link person for the project is Rotarian Gurdip Bahra and can be contacted for more details.



Saurpani village in the Gorkha Himalayan region.



Distributing food parcels during the pandemic.

Aarti provides vital help

Fantastic charity supported by club is on frontline of India's battle against Covid

A CHILDREN'S home in Southern India supported by the Rotary Club of Maidenhead has been in the frontline of the battle against Covid-19 in its impoverished community.

The Aarti Home, in Kadapa, which has been helped by Maidenhead Rotarians since 2012, provides a home and education for orphaned, abandoned and abused children.

It also runs training programmes and raises awareness of good health and hygiene in its community, a small quarry mining town in Andhra Pradesh.

With the spread of the pandemic to India, Aarti's inspirational founder Sandhya Puchalapalli has thrown the charity's resources into helping the most vulnerable people in Kadapa's slums.

She said: "Our relief operations are centred on four areas - awareness, relief, prevention and support."

Before India went into lockdown in early March 2020, Aarti started raising awareness about social distancing with 1,000 large banners giving hygiene guidance and information about the virus which were displayed all over the area.

And 5,000 leaflets highlighting the importance of handwashing were also distributed.

"We are creating and distributing three kinds of packs for different sections of society - a sanitation relief pack consisting of cleaning supplies and masks; a dry ration relief pack for families in dire



The Aarti women's co-operative has been producing 1,000 masks a day.

need and Covid-19 patient kits for quarantined patients for all their needs," said Sandhya.

"We have made and distributed 3,000 sanitation packs, 3,000 dry relief packs and 35 patient kits.

"The identification and distribution is being done in close collaboration with the district administration to identify and reach 21,695 families and 700 migrant workers. We are looking to distribute another 7,000 kits."

Since last March Aarti's women's cooperative has been making 1,000 reusable two and three-ply masks a day for frontline workers.

"This is enabling our women to earn a living while performing an extremely valuable task. Currently, many of our essential workers in Kadapa are wearing

masks made by Aarti women," said Sandhya. In addition, Aarti has donated 10 beds to the Kadapa hospital's isolation ward and is involved in helping stranded migrant workers, who are struggling without food or shelter, to get home.

Sandhya added: "Our most vulnerable sections of society - children and women in need - continue to face even more danger now. Our helplines and support networks are open and continue to work 24/7."

An extra donation from the club has helped to keep disadvantaged children in the area fed during the pandemic. The International Committee donated an extra £500 to fund nutritional kits for children unable to come to school due to the lockdown.

Thanking the club for the extra support, Aarti spokesman Sunilkanth Rachamadugu said: "Usually during school days, we provide three nutritious meals for the children - breakfast, lunch and an evening snack."

"As most of the children come from highly disadvantaged backgrounds, these tend to be their main meals. However, due to the lockdown, children could not come to school and their parents have been unable to provide good nutrition and consequently the children's health was impacted."

The donation has enabled the charity to provide 150 children's nutrition kits for four weeks.

Breaking the cycle of poverty in Malawi

Club donation will help improve education in one of the world's poorest countries

THE Club is supporting the final phase of a school building programme in Malawi to help break the cycle of poverty in one of the poorest countries in the world.

The international committee has donated £500 to The Mlambe Project to finish construction of two new classrooms at Chikoleka Primary School.

It will enable 120 more children to be taught indoors each year – benefiting 3,000 disadvantaged girls and boys over the next 25 years.

More than half of the people in Malawi survive below the poverty line with a quarter living in extreme poverty.

Poor education leaves communities in a relentless cycle of poverty.

Half of the children do not finish primary school and UNICEF estimates the country lacks 36,000 primary school classrooms – meaning many children have to learn outside.

The Mlambe Project builds schools using local resources with the aim of improving the quality of education and creating sustainable local employment and skills development.

It is pioneering the Earthbag construction method, which uses filled bags of soil and is a cost-efficient, faster and more sustainable alternative to building



Children outside one of the Mlambe Project's completed school buildings.

with bricks.

International committee chairman Graham Brunsden said: "The Mlambe project provides infrastructure and support for junior education in Malawi.

"The particular project, to which we have committed £500, is towards the completion of two new classrooms in a primary school. They use sustainable

methods of construction and local resources, which is another plus.

"Improving the education of young children in Malawi is surely cost-effective. As well as economic benefits, an educated person should be better able to make informed choices concerning population control and environmental issues. These affect us all."



Constructing the shell of a building using the Earthbag construction method.

£1,000 for Beirut

A £1,000 donation was made by the club to the Lebanese Red Cross in the wake of the explosion in August last year that devastated the capital city Beirut.

Members unanimously agreed the donation, which was sent via the British Red Cross, in response to warnings from UN agencies of a humanitarian crisis following the massive blast.

President Mary Spinks said: "All of the members are appalled by what has happened and are very concerned for the people who have been left homeless and destitute by this terrible tragedy.

"We hope our donation will help to relieve at least some of the suffering in the wake of the disaster."

A question of adding value

The future of membership lies in creating clubs that truly enhance Rotarians' lives

WHAT does the future of Rotary membership look like? This was the big question grappled with in a talk by a senior American Rotarian, Brad Howard, to District 1090 members on the subject of strengthening membership initiatives.

Brad is former board member with a distinguished career in Rotary who is passionate about membership.

He posed some fundamental questions about Rotary and had a simple answer to how to both retain existing members and attract new ones - create a club that adds so much value to members' lives that:

- They don't want to leave
- New members want to join because Rotary offers so much to enhance their lives.

Brad believes Covid-19 is a pivot point that forces us to work out what is the very essence of Rotary. What does being in Rotary offer and why should people join and stay?

He stressed the 'competition' for membership does not come from other service clubs like the Lions. Instead life itself is our aggressive competitor - work, family, lack of time and other commitments. Life gets in the way.

To address this Brad says we must answer a simple, but

fundamental, question.

Is Rotary a 'service organisation with members' or is it a 'members' organisation that does service?'

For Brad it is the latter. He believes you must take care of your members and think about them first. Everything else follows from that.

"We are a membership organisation that does service. The people we serve are the beneficiaries, while our 'customers' are our club members," he said. "And clubs that listen to their members are the ones that grow."

In Brad's words 'the tide has been going out on traditional Rotary membership' for some time.

Clubs now need to evolve with a simple strategic vision - creating an emotional bond based on what the club membership wants.

Put simply, Rotarians must focus on making their clubs better for existing members to make them attractive to new members.

To do this, Brad says we need to get an understanding of what is important to our members and focus on those needs - asking what do people want out of being in Rotary?

As an organisation Rotary

has always offered social interaction and the cultivation of friendship. Brad argues we must honour that tradition and build on it - but not be bound by it. For example, he asks whether a sit-down meal is really necessary.

But he stresses a process of evolution, rather than rapid change, is what is required.

The first step is to get honest feedback from the membership about how Rotary can enhance their lives.

This obviously includes building bonds of friendship but Brad believes in terms of new members Rotary must look beyond attracting 'retirees with time on their hands'.

It needs to create clubs for people who are 'building their lives'. This includes everyone from young professionals and young people with families to the aforementioned recently retired (who, you can argue, are building new lives for themselves).

Among the things clubs can offer to add value are providing professional and business mentorship to new members - to attract people looking for solutions. And being a network offering support, advice and experience to others.

"Stronger businesses and

better supported families equal improving communities," says Brad.

He advises clubs take advantage of the many initiatives and schemes Rotary has that will be attractive to new and younger members including those with families - Interact, Rotaract, RYLA, youth opportunities, business exchanges, Rotary scholarships. All add value and help spread Rotary values.

"Being in Rotary must add value to life. We want to be the club people aspire to be part of, a club people love so much they don't want to leave - a gateway to live better lives," said Brad.

To do this we need to start by finding out what members want so we can add value to their lives and develop what Brad terms 'a promise we can deliver on'.

So, what do Maidenhead Rotarians think? What is it about being in the club that adds value to your life and what could be done to add more? What do you want out of the club and is it delivering?

Email in your thoughts to martintrepte23@gmail.com and hopefully we'll have enough to continue the debate via a letters-style page in the next issue of Rotary Matters.

Janet takes a pro-active approach to new members

CLUB membership secretary Janet Perry is planning a pro-active approach to recruiting new members - but also to ensuring they get the most out of being a Rotarian.

Janet, who was appointed the club's membership secretary in August, said: "The thing I am really interested in is driving membership. I wanted a job with a very clear focus."

She wants to use every opportunity to attract new members, such as having a recruitment stand at club events and encouraging existing members to spread the word about Rotary among friends and family.

"We need to get members to look at all the benefits that membership has

brought them and not be shy in spreading the word about the opportunities Rotary brings and encouraging new people to join," she said.

She also plans to improve the induction process to help new members settle in quickly and find their way around the club.

Janet, who had a 17-year career in banking before moving into business management in education, knows how the skills new members have developed in industry can contribute to Rotary.

"We want new members to get the most out of being a member and to be able to use their skills to the best effect, such as by joining the right committee or project where they can really make a difference."



How does your garden grow?

BBC radio horticultural expert offers advice and top tips to club in Zoom talk

THERE was a bountiful crop of expert gardening advice for Rotarians to reap at one of the club's Monday meeting, thanks to guest speaker Colin Evans, who has spent most of his life in the horticultural business.

Colin, who can be heard on BBC Radio Berkshire dispensing gardening wisdom on Sunday mornings from 11am, began his career as a research botanist and has worked for ICI, run his own horticulture business and been a lecturer in horticultural science. Throughout his career he has also worked in radio and TV alongside many famous names.

Speaking to his audience over Zoom, he said almost a year of lockdown had created lots of interest in gardens. "People who were not particularly interested in gardening got more interested in it, especially when garden centres reopened and were one of the few places you could go," he



joked. His wide-ranging talk was packed with advice and useful tips for those keen to be out in the garden despite the time of year.

He suggested planting early varieties of potatoes such as Home Guard or Arran Pilot which are disease resistant and easy to grow.

"You'll be amazed by how quickly you will get results from these first potatoes," he

said.

Other activities suggested for those anxious to be busy outdoors included digging over ground ready for planting in March and pruning back roses in preparation for the spring.

On the fruit front, Colin suggested raspberries as a crop that delivered great results but required very little attention, while he suggested the easiest

onion variety to grow was shallots.

"It's a very old, tried-and-tested variety that can go in the ground now," he said.

The talk was peppered with top tips, such as keeping compost evenly damp by making sure you always seal the bag properly. Another pearl of wisdom was to spread compost out on concrete or a plastic sheet for 48 hours to allow the birds to clean it up by picking out the insects and grubs.

Colin's talk was followed by an extensive Q and A session, with Rotarians seeking advice on a wide range of their own gardening problems.

So popular was his talk that Colin was invited back for another session later in the year. He will also be taking part in the club's [Rotary Open Gardens Weekend planned for June 25-27](#) when he will be on hand in one of the gardens to answer visitors' horticultural questions.

Club programme February/March

| Day | Date | Event & Time | Details |
|--------|-------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Monday | February 1 | Zoom: 6.30pm | Business meeting |
| Monday | February 15 | Zoom: 6.30pm | Rhyddian Jones on Beethoven |
| Sunday | February 21 | Zoom: 10.30am | Joint meeting with other clubs |
| Monday | March 1 | Zoom: 12.30pm | Business meeting |
| Monday | March 15 | Zoom: 6.30pm | Margaret Thomas: Thames Hospice |
| Monday | March 29 | Zoom: 6.30pm | Marc Pearson: Modern slavery |

Rotary calendar

February 2021: Peace and Conflict Prevention/Resolution Month

1-11 February – International Assembly, virtual
23 February – Rotary's anniversary

March 2021: Water and Sanitation Month

8-14 March – World Rotaract Week
31 March – Preregistration discount ends for the Rotary International Convention

April 2021: Maternal and Child Health Month

30 April – Rotary International Convention registrations and ticket cancellations due

May 2021: Youth Service Month

14-16 May – [Presidential Conference – Ascension Rotaract MDIO \(USA\)](#)

June 2021: Rotary Fellowships Month

12-16 June – [Rotary International Virtual Convention](#)

Club events still in the pipeline

Despite the current Covid-19 lockdown the club is still planning the following events in the hope they will go ahead in some form. Dates and details to be confirmed.

- A Golf Charity Competition at Maidenhead Golf Club
- Bag a Bargain – a preloved bags and jewelry event
- Maidenhead Open Gardens
- Maidenhead Bikeathon
- Maidenhead Boundary Walk

