

Rotary Congleton

AGM Report 2020

President's Report

In these unprecedented times when most voluntary organisations have closed down, the Rotary family continues to function but, of course, in a much-reduced way. Numerous planned activities have either been cancelled or postponed to a later date. However, members are still holding virtual meetings via Zoom and other social media platforms.

Under normal circumstances Rotary Congleton is a thriving organisation raising money for worthy causes within the community. The club has members from all walks of life and those still working appreciate how valuable time is but always find a few hours to support the Club. We meet most Monday evenings at Astbury Golf Club, often with partners and friends. We work closely with many schools and youth organisations holding competitions throughout the year for all Congleton youngsters. We organise and run two major fundraising events each year, the Swimathon which takes place in February and in November the spectacular Bonfire and Firework display in Congleton Park.

Since taking over the Presidency in July 2019 it has been a very busy year so far staging various competitions for local youngsters. In late 2019 and early this year several competitions for youngsters were launched starting with the very popular Young Chef which has been running for very many years. We also introduced two new competitions, Youth Speaks where a team of three are given a subject to debate within a specified time and the Young Photographer, a competition for two age groups based on a specific subject. The ever-popular Young Artist competition for 2020 has been taken up by all but one school in Congleton. However, with the current Covid-19 pandemic we may need to review / cancel this year's competition.

July is always a wonderful month for members when many visit all the local primary schools to present year 6 pupils, who are leaving to move up to senior school, with a Dictionary4Life. A superbly illustrated dictionary that we hope will be used by the child for many years. Each dictionary has the individual's name written on a special Rotary presentation page, opposite which is an autograph page for all their teachers and class mates to sign. An excellent dictionary the youngsters can look back on for the rest of their lives.

In August we held a very successful luncheon in a superb marquee at Glebe Farm. The luncheon was to raise funds to purchase special chemotherapy chairs for Macclesfield hospital to replace the old uncomfortable standard chairs. In total the lunch raised approximately £7,000 which enabled the hospital to purchase four new chairs that are now in use. When the new Christie Cancer Care Centre is completed at Macclesfield the chairs will be relocated into the new chemotherapy department.

September saw us staging the ever popular "Last Night of the Proms" at New Life Church. A fabulous evening with Rode Hall Silver Band and guest soprano Sarah Francis. The evening was a huge success, not a spare seat to be found anywhere!

In conjunction with Biddulph Rotary Club we purchased a special arthritic chair for a local youngster who suffers from arthritis in many parts of his body. The chair will enable him to be far more comfortable during lessons and give service for many years to come.

Last October about ten Congleton members with wives / husbands and partners attended the Rotary

District's annual conference held in Llandudno. This is an action-packed weekend with speakers giving interesting presentations on many different subjects. Approximately one thousand people attended and enjoyed a first-class weekend very professionally organised and presented. This year's conference is scheduled to take place in Harrogate in October which members are looking forward to.

In October a number of members helped Alsager Rotary Club celebrate their annual Charter Night when they held a black-tie Murder Mystery evening at Alsager Golf club. A splendid evening that was enjoyed by all.

We very sadly lost Eric Capper after a long illness in autumn. Eric was one of our longest serving Rotarians having joined the club in 1983. His funeral on November 12th was attended by virtually every member. In Eric's memory we commissioned a new Young Chef Trophy, suitably engraved, which was presented to this and last year's Young Chefs at Congleton High School by his widow Joy and daughter Jayne. Eric will undoubtedly be sorely missed by all who knew him.

The annual November bonfire and firework display was superb with approximately forty minutes of fireworks split between two magnificent displays. Unfortunately, the weather leading up to the bonfire & firework display was atrocious with rain, rain & more rain. Consequently, the park was virtually waterlogged which created much mud reducing the number of people who attended on the night. Having said that those who did go had a wonderful time.

The annual Christmas light switch on is one of Rotary's main community involvement days when many members help out' with marshalling and traffic and crowd control throughout the day. The highlight of the

day for the children is of course when Santa Claus makes his appearance and that's when crowd control becomes challenging!

In December we held our Christmas Show and Concert which took place at the Daneside theatre. Entertainment was provided by Silk Brass and Eaton Bank's fantastic "Encore" choir. A superb selection of Christmas songs and music along with many other favourites were played and sung. The show which was a virtual sell-out was enjoyed by the audience, many saying: – "a wonderful evening that really got everyone into the Christmas spirit." In the run up to Christmas we visited several Care and Nursing Homes as well the War Memorial hospital on Christmas Eve to give Christmas presents to the residents and patients, many of whom do not have family.

Our Christmas party at the Golf Club was very well supported with many wives / partners and friends in attendance. Traditional games and quizzes were enjoyed by all.

A new initiative we launched in conjunction with Congleton Town Council at the beginning of winter was Congleton's first Tree of Light. A Christmas tree was purchased and positioned near the Cenotaph. The general public were able to buy stars at £5 each and write a few words either in memory of a loved one or to wish a friend / relative or to celebrate a new birth Christmas Greetings. All the stars were hung on the tree and a brief ceremony took place on December 8th when the lights were switched on.

We held the annual Swimathon in the swimming pool at Congleton Leisure Centre in February. Teams from many local schools, clubs, youth organisations and companies plus many others took part with 50% of the team's sponsorship being donated back to a charity of their choice.

From the Christmas concert proceeds we purchased two guitars, one standard and one electric guitar for presentation to Eaton Bank Academy music department in appreciation of their continued support and singing at our concert. Both instruments were purchased locally supporting the local community.

In the weeks leading up to Easter we hold an "Easter Egg Event" when sixty or so giant 5kg Easter Eggs are distributed to pubs, clubs and shops with a football card. Players pay £1 to pick a team against which they write their name. When the card is full of names the winning team is revealed by scratching off a covered area. The lucky winner is then presented by the venue with the giant Easter Egg. This year the coronavirus has of course curtailed this popular fundraiser but we can say that to date we have covered our costs with a small surplus which is now in our charity account & will be donated to a worthy cause in due course.

Congleton Rotary Club normally raise over £25,000 for charity and good causes during any one year but due to the current pandemic our fundraising activities will of course be much curtailed. For that reason we are looking at many new initiatives / ideas for when life returns to some form of normality.

The club has seen a considerable amount of publicity in the local newspaper via our website and on Facebook over the past twelve months thanks to our Publicity / Photographic member. We also paid for a leaflet mail drop to all the new houses in Congleton. Whilst the benefit in terms of new members has not been as good as we hoped the main benefit has been to get our name and what we do out into the public domain. I am pleased to welcome two new members to the club and one other, soon!

During the year we enjoyed a number of social outings & functions such as the 60 / 70's evening we held in Astbury village hall in February.

As your President I would like to thank your Council, all the Project Leaders and indeed every member of the club for your hard work and for your support during what has been, a quite unique year for me – thank you.

Rod Goodier

Treasurers report

General account

Some weeks ago the Club agreed that we levy a subscription for the next Rotary year of £30 per quarter. To balance the books we would hold one or two fundraising events for the general account only and put the cost of the Charter Night up. No money would be kept in the general account from any charity events.

As we all know the corona virus has upended many things including Rotary. Because of the uncertainty and the unknown outlook, I suggest that for now we continue with the proposed £30 per quartersubscription as agreed earlier.

Charity account

My treasurers report shows that we have £11,181.15 available to donate.

Of that, if we go by last year, then the teams will want about £5,000 for their own good causes and we have agreed to donate 2 x £1,000 to our chosen charities. That then leaves £4,181.15 available

for us to distribute, however there should still be some more to come from both the Swimathon as well as the

Easter Egg competition. Amount is as yet unknown. Even with a best guess we don't have a large amount available to donate until we raise some more. Our next major fundraising event would normally be the Bonfire but given the uncertain outlook because of the corona virus the Bonfire may, or may not happen; indeed we don't know when we will next be able to have any of our fundraising events. Therefore, I suggest that for the time being we proceed with great caution when making donations and be prepared for it to be some time before we are up and running again on the fundraising side.

David Worth

Membership Services Report

An interesting and challenging year and as the chair of Membership Services here is my report for the last year.

Club Numbers

Club numbers have fluctuated over the last year for various reasons. Although we have had 2 new members join recently and the potential of 2 more joining shortly over all we are still down on this time last year.

Recruitment

The club is pretty stretched at present with reduced numbers. However, the club has decided not to reduce our commitments in any way, but to continue with the usual events and projects for the coming year. However, we need to make every effort to recruit more members and get more help with the running of some of these projects, Bonfire being an example.

A Rotary flyer was sent out to most Congleton inhabitants as a way of advertising the Club. Although this only produced one new member joining the club it was felt that it was a well worth exercise and might be considered again in the future.

We have also initiated a mentor system for new members, the aim of this is to provide guidance and support in the early steps of Rotary. The mentee receives a welcome letter introducing them to the club and their mentor and explains the role of their mentor. In addition, we have provided guidance to the mentors of what we would like them to do for the mentees in a letter. Built into this new initiative are periodic checks to make sure new members are settling in and are happy; this feedback is passed back to chair of membership services and the President should any follow up action be needed. This is all with the aim of improving retention of members.

Friends of Rotary

The club decided to formalise becoming "Friends of Rotary" so a system was introduced during this period under the auspices of Kevin who runs the recruitment side of the club. To date we have 6 couples who have signed up to become friends and this is something the club is going to expand over the coming months as a way hopefully get more full members.

Web Sites

The club has decided not to go down the route of using the RIBI web template for our club site as it was felt that the RIBI site included too much information. Instead we will continue using the existing site at www.congletonrotary.com. but in a simpler version. This has now been implemented. However, if members want more information on the national and international aspects of Rotary then this is still available on the RIBI site.

The club now has a Swimathon web site at www.congleton-swimathon.com which makes it very simple for teams to register online and get all the necessary information of the event. Teams can get online sponsorship through a Virgin Money Giving site which is proving to be very successful in raising funds. Furthermore, the Virgin Money Giving web site can be used for any other fund raising activities and the big advantage of doing so is that Gift Aid is automatically calculated. This might be an option for the "Tree of Light" if the club decides to continue with this event.

PR & Advertising

John Gauld has done an excellent job with advertising Club activities. He has acted as Club photographer and provided regular articles for the local chronicle. More recently he has also taken on the role of adding articles and advertising to Facebook. The club really appreciates all his efforts.

Newsletter

A monthly Newsletter was introduced in Dec 19 and distributed to all club Members either in printed or email format. Kevin initiated this project and he is producing an excellent information sheet of current topics within the club and as well as a monthly diary of events of What's Happening in the club for that month. He is doing an excellent job on keeping members informed. Well done Kevin

Charity Events

The regular fund raising events of Swimathon, Easter Eggs, Jazz Night, Bonfire Night, Last Night of the Proms, and Christmas Concert helped again to raise several thousand pounds for local charities. However, the total amount was lower than previous years.

In addition to these events there was the opportunity to use the Past President's wedding marquee for a charity lunch to raise money for new chemo chairs at Macclesfield hospital. The event was a sit-down buffet lunch, raffle and live auction of some excellent prizes; another very successful event which raised over £7000 for this very worthy cause. The cheque was presented to the hospital and 3 chairs were subsequently purchased and are now in use. Another very good effort from all concerned.

Speakers

The club has had a variety of excellent speakers over the last year with a diverse selection of topics ranging from History of making walking sticks to My life in oil. Many thanks to Phil Robinson and his wife Jill for all their efforts in getting such a broad selection of speakers.

Socials

Numerous social events were held through the year. This included several quiz nights, Christmas party, BBQ at Astonbury, Picnic in the Park at Gawsorth and another live band night in Astbury village hall. All these events were well supported by members and their guests. However, 3 events had to be cancelled through lack of support.

**ROTARY IS NOT ALL ABOUT RAISING MONEY
ITS HAVING A GOOD TIME AND HELPING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Stew Price

Youth Services Report

Young Chef

The competition ended at the Regional Final in Leeds with Daniel Amies from Congleton High School coming third. A great result for us making him in effect the third best Young Chef in the Region! Well done Daniel!

Young Artist

The competition was a great success with all schools bar two taking part. The competition culminated with a Presentation Evening involving our Sponsors at the Picture House.

Young Photographer (Project Leader: John Gauld)

The competition was run for the first time this year. After the local winners' presentations, the entries were submitted to the District competition but we were not placed

Youth Speaks

The competition ended for us at the District Final at the Forest Hills Hotel, Frodsham, The Senior Team from Eaton Bank Academy represented everyone well but were not placed. The standard was extremely high.

Well done to Josh Everett (Chairperson), Helen Banks (Speaker) and Connor Harbidge (Vote of Thanks) for representing us so well!

Youth Budget

Allocated £1200

Actual

Young Chef - £356.37 Young Artist - £470.46

Youth Speaks - £150.00 Young Photographer - £30.00

HQ Competition Booklets - £1.87

Total Expenditure £1008.70

Eric Westwood

International Report

LendwithCare – Micro Finance

For almost 7 years we have invested in this micro finance scheme for individuals and groups and we have supported with 51 loans both new and with the reinvestment of money paid back to us. It has been very rewarding as we know we have helped 397 entrepreneurs and their 1,585 members of family. It has also helped create 171 jobs.

Our initial credit amount of £2,476.85 multiplied into £10,901.43 by repayment. We are asked to make donations to help with the running of LendwithCare and that equates to £257.08 leaving us with a credit balance of £669.46. This is the result of 552 transactions made in the past

I am almost sorry to say that currently there is only one gentleman on the LendwithCare list who is from the Philippines and requesting another £2,500 to buy another Fruit Stall and to put gates on his house. This does not meet our tough but fair criteria.

This concludes this report.

Lorraine Sloane

Foundation

My aim over the year was to fulfil the basic expectations of R I to contribute monies to the Foundation charity and also argue the case to continue the support to “End Polio Now” via donations to Rotary’s Polio Plus appeal. We are asked to contribute £80 per member to Every Rotarian Every Year to ensure foundation monies stay healthy (and entitle us to receive grants from , for our own activities in the future)

Assuming 20 members this would equate to £1600 ; I am happy to say that £1000 has been designated this year (Bearing in mind that our charity funds are reduced and also getting district grants back is not straight forward! this is a very pleasing amount.)As a caveat this money was able to go (and count as our contribution with all its advantages)to Disaster Response Fund which we nearly always support on an annual basis anyway.(In effect using our charity money to indirectly fulfil our EREY’s commitment.) Polio Eradication is so close and it would be foolish to have insufficient funds to” finish the job” I am proud to say that we have contributed £1000 to this very worthwhile cause. RI suggest a figure of £40 / Rotarian; which for the mathematicians amongst us will show is a fantastic contribution over and above that recommended.

It has been my pleasure to keep you all informed about the wonderful work of Foundation and Polio Plus. A huge thank you for your support and hope more of the same in future year.

Ian Robinson

Projects

Easter Egg 2019.

We had a successful profit from distributing approx 60 Eggs throughout Congleton public houses, cafes, shops and hairdressers as well as vets and nursing homes. We had a profit of approx £2,300 and we hoped to match this amount.

Easter Egg 2020

Please understand that we have been unable to complete the collection of this project due to Covid 19. We actually handed out 54 eggs the first week in March to the varied but trusted venues. We all kept incontact with then and the total of £1,273.08 was collected before the surprise lock down on 23rd March. When we remove the cost of the eggs, which had been ordered and paid for in January together with more Scratch Cards we have a profit of £347.58. A great but unavoidable disappointment. However when lockdown is over we hope to recoup more money for charity.

Lorraine Sloane

Dictionary4Life 2019

A very successful hand out to all year 6 pupils leaving their primary schools. I am sure that All of us who helped to hand these out received a warm welcome from the schools and many thanks for the pupils.

Dictionary4Life.2020

We do not know when or if this will take place this year. The dictionaries have been ordered and paid for and we normally receive them May.

There are two possibilities, the first that the schools do re open in May and the second is that we take them to the senior schools wherever possible. It will be a great shame if the pupils, through no fault of their own, do not receive this really useful book We must wait and see when the presentations will be possible.

Lorraine Sloane

Swimathon 2019.

We are aware from David's report that this was another successful annual event. Our costs were kept to the minimum but we have revised our food and confectionary table for 2020. We all enjoyed the presentation of cheques to our chosen charities and we hosted a Presentation evening, including a buffet on May 20th. This was extremely appreciated and it has been discussed that we do this again.

Swimathon 2020.

All monies are not yet received.

Again, we hit problems collecting all the money from all of the participants; this is due to the Corona-19virus. We have outstanding collections from 3 schools and 2 companies. David will update us all with the full figures as soon as he is able to.

Lorraine Sloane

Bonfire and Firework Display in the Park

Bonfire Costs

Bonfire costs amounted to £12.5 in 2019. The costs are about £2 higher than last year although this included to some extent, costs that were increased for inflation, such as insurance, advertising and security

Expenses for 2019 have been higher due principally to the following factors: -

- a. No discount from Star Fireworks, it has returned to its original price of £7500 due to the increased cost of fireworks
- b. Last year there was no charge from St John's Ambulance, this year it was £293
- c. £160 increase in cost for additional security to stop individuals entering the firework firing zone from the woods
- d. £350 for a permit from Cheshire East (not yet paid)
- e. £168 for cost of additional barriers compared to 2018

The factors above have reduced income by about £2000.

The area which caused the greatest detrimental negative effect on net income, was of course poor ticket sales, down on 2018 by £3600 and by £9000 on 2017.

Income and Expenditure 2017 - 19

	2017	2018	2019
	£	£	£
Total ticket sales	22810	17399	13780
Rotary stalls	1303	1627	1786
Traders	935	800	925
Sponsors	1050	1150	1050
Total Income	26099	20976	17541
Expenses	11637	10680	12448
Estimated net			
Income	14462	10296	5093

Historical Net profit

	Net profit in	Date of event
	Previous years	in Nov
2011	9163	5th
2012	8004	3rd
2013	3313	2nd
2014	5492	1st
2015	8180	7th
2016	15829	5th
2017	14461	4th
2018	10296	3rd
2019	5093	2nd

Projection for 2020

The expense budget for 2020 is going to be in the order of £k12.5.

When looking at this coming year 2020, projected income is somewhat difficult to define for the following reasons: -

1. Historical net profit as shown in the table is very variable, but, seems to suggest that the further away from the 5th November the event date is held, the lower the attendance and hence ticket sales.
2. The weather undoubtedly is a major factor in terms of influencing the turnout of numbers of spectators, and hence sales of tickets.
3. The other interesting point to note is the fact that the Park Road gate takes by far the most income, followed by the Roldane gate, whilst the other two gates take very small amounts. The other surprising factor is that adult ticket sales exceed child sales by a factor of 4:1., via tickets sold through the T.I.C. Approximately 50% of sales emanate from this source. This data also suggests there is little point in offering a family ticket at reduced prices as typically the spectators are made up of adults.
4. Income from sponsors and Rotary stalls is expected to remain the same at about £k2.8.

Planning 2020

This year, the event will undoubtedly be severely affected by the corona virus as the government has already stated that whilst the lock down will ease in the coming weeks, social distancing will be the key strategy to follow going forward, and this is likely to continue for the next 12 months until a vaccine is readily available.

In such circumstances it is difficult to envisage how the Bonfire and Fireworks Display could possibly go ahead. At some point a decision will need to be made to cancel all the arrangements and bookings made so far for the event, this decision must be taken no later than August and possibly earlier.

Suppliers

On a positive note, the suppliers used in previous years have been contacted and confirmed for 2020 and include: -

Star Fireworks
Cheshire Marshalls
James Bedford Funfair
Rushey Farm
Paella Store
St John's Ambulance
James Gordon security
Chris Booth DJ

Members' Involvement

It is now clear that both Ken Williamson and John Lilley, because of ill health, will not in the future be available to us to assist in setting up on the Friday and Saturday morning of the event and in the dismantling operation taking place on Saturday evening.

Just as a reminder of the work required to successfully undertake the event, which requires members to assist in the following areas: -

- Act as members of the Bonfire Coordination Team
- Man the stand selling tickets in the Town Centre
- Assist in erecting and dismantling the stands and equipment required for the event on the Friday Saturday and Sunday the 1st, 2nd and 3rd November
- Man the stalls on Saturday 2nd November and Man the gates
- Assist in the collection of takings

Last year members did an admirable job in helping with the various tasks to make the event a great success, but, our age profile is getting older and some members simply cannot be expected to undertake some of the heavy manual tasks.

If and when the next event takes place we will need to come up with a plan which provides manpower from other sources to assist in undertaking much of the manual work.

Brian Hogan