

Nov/Dec 2023

Rotary
Congleton



NEWS *Letter*



Merry Christmas

IN THIS ISSUE: **President's Patter** **Charter 76**
Tree of Light **Swimathon 24** **Youth Services**
News **and Diary**

PRESIDENT'S PATTERN

1. Remembrance Day

On Sunday 12th November I attended the Remembrance Day Service and parade on behalf of the Club, which took place in the Town. The parade was one of the longest that I have seen for some time, and once again included soldiers and officers from the Princess Irene Brigade. The brigade is part of the Dutch Army who were stationed in Congleton during WW2 and have returned every year since to mark Remembrance Day with the Town.

Around the cenotaph in Lawton Street, where the service took place, was a very large crowd of spectators, all paying their respects to the contribution made by our armed services for the Country.

2. Young Chef

The Young Chef competition took place at Eaton Bank School on Tuesday 21st November with four contestants taking part, Alfie, Dmytro, Daniel and Kaitlin.

The quality and presentation of the food was excellent, once again demonstrating the great young talent that exists in our schools today.

The judges were the Chef from the Alexander Court Hotel, Andrew Bourne and Rosemary Knight, who had a difficult job in selecting the winner and runner up. The winner was Alfie who was presented with the Eric Capper trophy, with the runner up being Dmytro from Ukraine. Both the winner and runner up will represent the school in the District heats.

3. Xmas Light Switch On

Once again members of Congleton Rotary played a major part in helping to marshall the Xmas Light Switch-On hosted by the Town Council on Friday 24th November. The event went off without a hitch and we managed to open a space by the bandstand for the parade to enter into with consummate ease, much to my surprise.

Doug once again did a great job as Father Xmas and lead the singing to the delight of many.

Meanwhile Jo and her band of helpers were busy selling mementos on the Rotary Stall in the Town, as well as shapes to hang on the Tree of Light.

4. Tree of Light

On Saturday the 25th November was the Tree of Light Ceremony hosted once again by Doug who came along with his own personal PA. Many Rotarians



came along to help out and watch the event which was very much appreciated.

The Bear Town Choir did a great job of singing throughout the event, despite the very cold conditions.

Jo, the Town Mayor and I all said a few words to mark the occasion, and all were reminded that it was Alan Parton who originally brought the idea to Congleton and who first set the event in motion in 2019.

Thanks to Jo and Janet for organising another very successful event.

Brian



CONGLETON
ROTARY
CELEBRATES
76
GLORIOUS YEARS
OF SERVICE TO
OUR COMMUNITY
1947-2023

On Monday, 20th November, around 120 Rotary-Congleton members, partners, guests and friends turned out in force to celebrate the granting of the Rotary Charter to the Congleton club, exactly 76 years ago.

The Charter celebration dinner was held at the Sandhole Farm Oak Barn. Rotary-Congleton's president, Brian Hogan stressed the club's role providing service to the community – the theme of the evening. The Mayor and Mayoress of Congleton attended the event.

Musical entertainment was provided before dinner by two young stars from Eaton Bank Academy, Freya and guitarist Lilia, accompanied by their teacher Miss Sophie Walker. Other pupils from EBA entertained with drama, singing, aerobic and gymnastic performances.

Brian commented on the club's 76 years in Congleton. He said, 'During those 76 years many Rotarians have given service to the club and the community. The Rotary motto is 'Service above Self' and that says a lot about the kind of people that join and belong to Rotary. The Club has introduced over the years many innovative fundraising initiatives such as the Bonfire and Fireworks Display and Swimathon which are raising significant amounts of money which allow us to support good causes and charities in the community. The innovation continues with our environmental team who are undertaking a lot of work in the community as well as working closely with the Town Council. Past initiatives such as the Tree of light project are also being revitalised, demonstrating the level of service being given by our members to the community.'

Assistant District Governor Rtn. Edwin Partridge praised the exemplary work of the Congleton club in building its membership and its outstanding contribution to the life of the community, going on to cite the full programme of events organised by the club and praising the £45,000 spent last year supporting worthy causes, including schools, young people, as well as disabled and disadvantaged people.

Entertainment was provided by accomplished after-dinner speaker and comic, Austin Knight. Mr Knight spent 11 years as an entertainer travelling the world on some of the most prestigious cruise ships ever built.

Brian Hogan spoke of Service in the Community. Below: The guests in the Sandhole Barn







Young performers from Eaton Bank Academy entertained throughout the evening





Around the tables... waiting for the superb Sandholes dinner to be served.



Rod compered, Edwin Partridge complimented, Austin entertained and John and Mosey, Pauline Hogan and the Mayoress and Mayor enjoyed it all...





At a short ceremony, held in the bitterly cold in the community garden on Saturday, November 25th, the Tree of Light was switched on and will remain lit until twelfth night, festooned with wooden shaped decorations with personal and seasonal messages. The Beartown Choir led a performance lasting nearly an hour, singing all the best-known traditional Christmas Carols. They sat in the Community Gardens in the clear, but cold afternoon light. The carols were introduced by compere, Rtn. Doug Parker, appropriately dressed in Edwardian costume. Tracy Heyes and Richard Lingard both read short seasonal poems. Organiser, Jo Lancaster told the audience of the aims of the Tree of Light and how it is changing to reflect both the economic times and the need to embrace a more environmental theme, with recyclable lightweight wooden shapes, able to be hung for the first time on the growing tree. Rotary-Congleton president, Brian Hogan reminded everyone of the history of the tree, dedicated to the memory of Alan Parton, who brought the tree of light to Congleton. Mayor of Congleton Cllr. Rob Moreton acknowledged the hard working Rotarians and the support that this venture and others give to the community before the tree was lit for another year. A thoughtful team from the Old Kings Arms across the road, turned up with an impromptu supply of hot tea, which they dispensed free of charge to the grateful crowd. The five shapes can still be purchased from the Information Centre until December 22nd when the last ones will be hung on the tree. They are priced with a suggested minimum donation of just £1.



Congleton gets its Swimathon back next year!

The recently opened Congleton Leisure Centre will host the popular Rotary Swimathon event on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th March in 2024. This is a special occasion, marking the return of Swimathon to Congleton and the first in the new pool. The event is an important fundraiser for local charities.

While the Congleton Leisure Centre was being rebuilt, the Swimathon event moved to Biddulph. While the facilities at Biddulph Leisure Centre were superb, the distance from Congleton meant that it was more difficult for several of the 'regular' Congleton teams to travel. For 2024, the event is back in Congleton.

Organisers, Sandra Conway and Rachel Brown say 'it's not too soon to start thinking about building a team and entering. Booking and sponsorship forms are available now on the dedicated Swimathon website. Booking early means that teams get first choice of their preferred day and time.' said Sandra.

Swimathon is a unique event that benefits all who take part. It encourages fitness and good health; it raises money for charities of the swimmers' choice and the whole of the remaining 50% of the monies raised go to Rotary's chosen causes. For 2024, the beneficiaries will be The Old Saw Mill and Listening Out Loud.

Listening Out Loud has recently opened a cafe and charity shop in Congleton. The aims of the Foundation are to assist ex-servicemen and women and support their wellbeing. The charity, based in Congleton, was set up in 2012 to support veterans affected by homelessness and mental health issues.

The Old Saw Mill works to enhance the lives of people who are socially isolated, lonely and in need of additional support. It provides a meeting place for groups of people with challenging problems and seeks to give stimulation by crafting, singing or simply having fun.

www.congleton-swimathon.com provides all the information.



Rotary's Christmas Concert at the Daneside Theatre heralds the start of the true Christmas spirit for those devoted Christmas music-lovers that make a point of supporting the event every year. This year, the concert on Saturday, 16th December, follows the traditional pattern with one significant addition. Silk Brass will be there as usual, so too the stunning choristers from Eaton Bank Encore Choir. The seasonal favourites will just keep coming all evening. Christmas Carols, music from the movies and some all-time favourites from down the ages will feature as well as some modern 'takes' on the well-loved seasonal themes.

The addition comes in the form of talented Ukrainian guest duet of Taisiia Holovko (Saxophone) and Hannah Shamihova (Violin). Their short starring role after the interlude will bring a taste of Christmas from Ukraine.

Tickets can be booked on-line from the Daneside Theatre (www.danesidetheatre.co.uk) or in person at the Congleton Information Centre at the town hall. Tickets and seat reservations can also be made online by copying the

£12.50 plus a small booking fee and the concert starts at 7.30pm.



During its recent 76th Charter evening, Rotary-Congleton's president Brian Hogan presented Rotary International's top award to two local Rotarians.

The first award was given to last year's president, Kevin Thompson. Kevin steered the club to receiving an international Rotary Citation during his year in office. The PHF award is personal recognition of his work in generating the biggest increase in the club membership for several years, adding 11 new members during his year in office. The second recognised John Gauld's work publicising the club, raising both its profile and understanding of Rotary and its work in Congleton.

Rotary-Congleton has a major ongoing involvement with local schools



Every year, Rotary-Congleton runs a programme of youth activities for the 16 local primary and two secondary schools that fall within its catchment area. The programme is part of an international commitment to an educational programme supporting schools and youth, involving every Rotary club in 200 countries throughout the world.

In Congleton, the programme is organised by its youth activities co-ordinator, Eric Westwood who earlier this year, visited every school to determine their needs and to assure them of Rotary's support across a number of areas, including the increasingly popular environmental education and support for sensory rooms for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) now being taught in the community.

Specific activities including four competitions; Young Photographer, Young Artist, Young Chef and Youth Speaks fall under Eric Westwood's specific jurisdiction, together with a major fundraiser, 'Swimathon' and a young citizen's award scheme called 'Stars of the Future.'

'Taken together, the youth programme represents a major investment by Rotary-Congleton in the area's youth, of which many local people may not be aware,' said Eric Westwood.

Young Photographer 2023 is presently underway, with most local schools already committed to participate. Open to pupils from 7 to 17, there is an overall winner with prizes presented in each participating school. Every year there is an exhibition in the Town Library over the Christmas holiday. This year the competition is organised by Rtn. Cath Brown email: cath7orchard@gmail.com

There's still time for the remaining schools to enter before the competition closes at the end of November. This year the theme is 'Buildings in Harmony with Nature.'

Young Artist runs in the spring-time and is so popular that the number of entries is restricted for each school! Nevertheless, earlier this year over 500 entries posed a serious problem for the judges. Prizes are awarded to the winners at each

ceives a trophy sponsored by Senior Aerospace Bird Bellows. The competition is run by Rod Goodier email rodgoodier@btinternet.com

This is the editorial for a feature article printed in The Congleton Chronicle in November outlining the commitment made to every child in our community.

Young Chef, similarly is just starting with both Congleton senior schools taking part in the local heats with the winners moving on to compete at Rotary's Northwest District and National levels if they progress through. The two local schools compete initially with their young chefs organising a menu and cooking a meal to decide who represents their school. Each year the Rotary's Eric Capper trophy is awarded alternatively to the winner from each school. Last year the team from Congleton High School were runners-up in the District competition. Eric Westwood runs this and Rotary supports the entrants with all their costs and also awards prizes and certificates.

Youth Speaks is run for the two secondary schools and this year Congleton High School are raring to go! Basically, a team of three has to speak on a subject of their choice, sum up and answer questions. Winners go forward to the District heat and if successful on to the National final.

Swimathon is a major event in the Rotary calendar that is supported by many local schools. It is also open to other youth groups, individual teams and local businesses. Teams obtain their own sponsorship, which is split 50/50 between a charity of their choice and Rotary's own two nominated recipients. Next year, the event will return to Congleton Leisure Centre for the first time after its rebuild. The event takes place on 15th and 16th March 2024. Every swimmer receives a medal. There's still time to enter a team with full information online at www.congleton-swimathon.com

Stars of the Future is an open offer to schools to nominate and recognise an individual pupil or a team that has done something special. Each winner is presented with a framed certificate, a medal and a prize. Gill Pickford... gillpickford6@gmail.com runs the scheme and says that the award is available throughout the year but may be especially useful for schools at the end of the school year.



Top: Eric Westwood, Youth Activities Co-ordinator

Centre: The article in the Congleton Chronicle on November 2nd

Bottom: Blackfirs Primary School - Their Swimathon team is fullsome evidence of the support given to Rotary-Congleton's Youth events

GOOD DECISIONS DON'T JUST HAPPEN! ASK YOURSELF THESE 4 QUESTIONS.



1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to All Concerned?
3. Will it Build **GOODWILL** and Better Friendships?
4. Will it Be **BENEFICIAL** to All Concerned?

Diary Page

This is our busy season!

The Daneside Theatre hosts the Silk Brass and Eaton Bank's Encore Choir again for an evening of Christmas favourites. Taya and her friend Hannah will provide an interlude with a Ukrainian Christmas favourite

Party Time! let your hair down with friends and partners and enjoy an evening of fun and high jinks, courtesy of our own entertainment team...

...then - It's time for 'Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year' everybody.

Details to be confirmed nearer the time...Don't forget that we are meeting at The Old Sawmill while Astbury Golf Clubhouse is being refurbished

Time to cross the eyes and dot the 't's for our major swimathon event. All leave cancelled and all hands to the pump!

Our Big weekend when Swimthon returns to Congleton, with the brand new Congleton Leisure Centre playing host to our popular event for the very first time.

De-briefing time. Does that mean its time to put the swims away! Let's see what went well this time around...

Sat 16 Dec '23	19:00 PM to 21:00 PM	Christmas Concert
Mon 18 Dec '23	19:00 PM to 22:00 PM	Christmas Party
Mon 8 Jan '24	19:00 PM to 22:00 PM	Business Meeting
Footnote:		VENUE TO BE CONFIRMED
Mon 22 Jan '24	19:00 PM to 22:00 PM	Speaker Night
Footnote:		At the Sawmill
Mon 5 Feb '24	19:00 PM to 22:00 PM	Business Meeting
Footnote:		VENUE TO BE CONFIRMED
Mon 19 Feb '24	19:00 PM to 22:00 PM	Speaker Night
Footnote:		Listen Out Loud
Mon 4 Mar '24	18:00 PM to 22:00 PM	Business Meeting
Footnote:		Swimathon Briefing
Fri 15 Mar '24	14:00 PM to 20:00 PM	Swimathon
Sat 16 Mar '24	14:00 PM to 21:00 PM	Swimathon
Mon 18 Mar '24	19:00 PM to 22:00 PM	Swimathon debrief