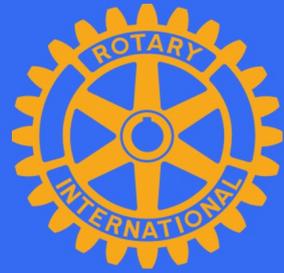




The ARCH

The Newsletter of the Rotary Club of Hexham



February 2021

A letter from your President

Dear Rotary Club members,

It was my idea to write a letter to you all wishing you a Happy New Year to be published in Arch. I started the letter just before Christmas but then two things happened. The first was that John Dumbrell told me that the first Arch of the new year would be in February and it seemed to me that this was a bit late to wish you a Happy New Year, a happy Valentine's Day being perhaps more appropriate. The second thing was that my initial draft was quite optimistic about the future generally and of Hexham Rotary Club in particular. However Boris then introduced further lock down restrictions so I scrapped the first draft.

I had another attempt between Christmas and New Year but even that proved to be too optimistic so what you are now reading is my third effort. I am now wondering what to say to you. There is no point in my saying "Looking forward to meeting with you in the near future" because although the first part of that statement is true, the bit about the "near future" has a slightly hollow ring to it. As you know you have kindly nominated me to be your President for a further year which is perhaps just as well because otherwise I might have been the first President never to have met his members in person during his year of office! I am reasonably optimistic that we might all be able to meet up during my second stint as President but I am reluctant to tempt fate by putting money on it. But then, being an accountant, I am fairly reluctant to put money on anything which will come as no surprise to you. My wife, Bobbie, and I have had our vaccine injections which gives us both a degree of comfort but I suspect that we are all going to have to be ultra cautious for quite a lot longer.



In the meantime my Council members and I are doing our best to keep things running as normally as possible. In particular I think we have had some excellent speakers but I would really value your input as to whether you think that as well. I would also value any suggestions you may have for future speakers, or if you have no particular individuals in mind, topics about which you might like to hear more. For example I am a member of Corbridge Gardening Society and I am sure with their help we could find a speaker on most horticultural topics. I have done a little bit of research and I think that I could organize a bingo evening for us all as a change from just listening to others speak, but I would only wish to do so if I thought that it is something you might enjoy. The talks are very good but unfortunately they cannot really stimulate interaction between members, which I am sure, is something that we are all sadly missing.

This is your Club not mine or Council's so please let us know if you think we are doing all right and we would welcome any suggestions from you as to how we might do things better or differently. These are very difficult times made worse by the fact that it is mid-winter with the consequence that we are even more restricted to our homes than we might otherwise have been. So if there is anything we can do to make life more enjoyable, let me know. In the meantime may I wish you all of the best and I really do look forward to the day when we can all meet again.

Miles

Tynedale Talking Newspaper

For many years now, our Rotary Club has supported this charity and put forward a team every eight weeks to provide an audio version of that week's Hexham Courant. Seven other organizations /groups take up the other weeks on rota.

Now recorded on a Thursday afternoon, the USB audio memory sticks are then posted out that evening by special Royal Mail delivery to folk in the district who for many reasons, are unable to read a physical copy of the Courant. The weekly team has comprised an administrator, an engineer and 4 readers (preferably 2 ladies and 2 men). Between 80 and 90 minutes of the spoken word are provided on the audio sticks and the whole operation, starting at 4 p.m., lasts no more than 2 hours.



Prior to lock down, the recordings took place in the West End Methodist Church . The Rotary team was organized by Peter Trevelyan and the administrator was always Brian Sanderson. Peter or one of the readers would in advance have edited and cut out from the Courant the most topical and appropriate articles to be read by the team.

Lockdown brought a need to quickly re-think all these arrangements and, without losing a week's issue, we continued to provide the Talking Newspaper, albeit remotely by zoom from our own homes. In addition, some of the volunteers also read the 'Northumbrian' monthly magazine via zoom. The results have been very effective and the recipients have been extremely happy with the quality of their audio recordings.

The technical aspects are currently undertaken by a small group of 'tech savvy' folk and the weekly teams now merely comprise 4 readers. These include the leader / editor for that week who receives the Courant in PDF format direct from one of the reporters. However, until such time as Covid restrictions are lifted we will not be formally operating in the name of our respective organizations.

At the present time, Rotary provides the following volunteer readers - Helen Underwood, Sandy Rutherford, Roger Abraham and myself (one of the leaders/editors). Hopefully however we will shortly be able to once again offer this Service as a Rotary Club Team. This is one of the few regular commitments that, as a Club, we offer to the local community, is a very worthwhile service and is definitely not over-demanding on individual Rotarians. I hope therefore that there may be other Rotarians willing to be an occasional reader and I will be very pleased to talk to anyone who might be further interested.

Brian Massey

MORE MATERIAL NEEDED

The Arch has had to revert to an issue every two months as there are so few contributions coming from readers. Of course Lockdown means that many activities are curtailed but equally other opportunities have arisen. Please let us have some of your stories—have you read any interesting books, taken up a new hobby, researched your family tree or found a new walk? Do you have any suggestions for future activities? Taken any interesting pictures or helped your neighbours?

There must be scores of interesting tidbits out there, so why not contribute to our newsletter.. If you are shy, we don't need to publish your name. Our next issue will be out on April 1st , so send any contributions in by the 20th March to;

dumbrelljl@btinternet.com

John Dumbrell, Editor

Have We Been Here Before?

We continue with Zoom meetings for the Club and Club Council and many of us use zoom to contact family and friends with an astonishing reach to all over the world. Indeed, a neighbouring club— if you ignore the Cheviots—is most enterprising and has a high powered succession of Rotary speakers. Kelso Conversations goes from strength to strength and most recently had John Hewko, the General Secretary of Rotary International talk to them. They get an audience of around 150 from all over the world and any Rotarian can join in. To get on their list you have to register at https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZEvdGurj0tEtYJCyvPIIVGEn8p_ZTzQOdW.

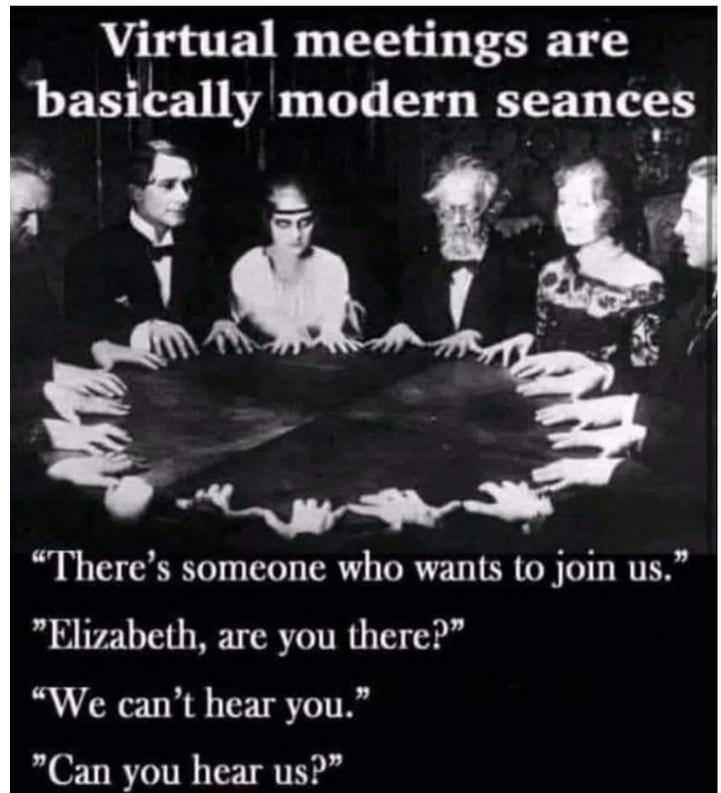
The evenings are a normal meeting of Kelso Rotary Club and are organised by Gordon McNally a past Director of Rotary International – if you remember he spoke to us about a year ago—and the next Kelso Conversation is on Thursday 11 February at 6:00pm (GMT), when they will welcome Past Rotary International President Ian Riseley who will talk about the exciting new Area of Focus; the Environment.

Past speakers included the current RI President, Holger Knaack, an incoming RI Director and other notables. It is completely free, makes an interesting evening and brings the latest Rotary thinking into your sitting room.

I hasten to add that all our meetings and Kelso's are not quite like the picture that Rita sent in!!

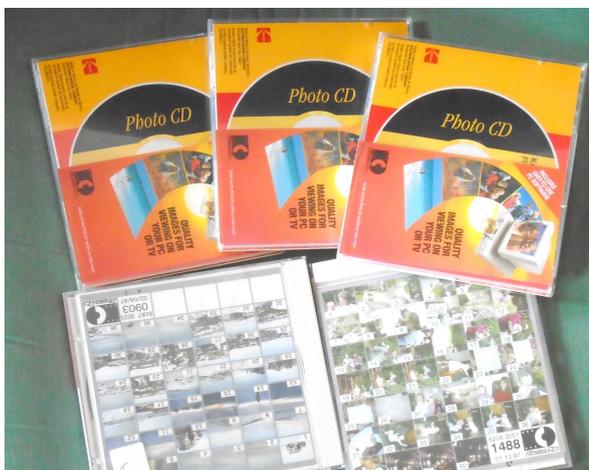
Although "Can you hear us" might apply.

JLD



Remember These

"These" are Kodak Photo CDs from the 1990s when Kodak thought it was a good idea to put 35mm photos on to a CD for easy reference and storage. Very useful at the time but was quickly overtaken by the rise of digital rather than film cameras and went out of fashion. Recently I



needed a copy of a picture on one of my Kodak CDs. So I popped it in a CD reader and tried to view it on my PC only to be told that it could not be read. Neither could the computer load the software to read them. So I was stuck but an internet search produced some software that could convert the images to JPEGs. It was not expensive but I now have that software on my computer and have converted all my Kodak CDs into jpeg format and stored them safely away. Should anyone else have any Kodak Photo CDs they would like converted then just ask!

John Dumbrell

Singing Virtually

St Mary's parish choir has around 20 regular members, and Ann and I get a great deal of pleasure from being a part of it, although I cannot lay claim to any great amount of musical ability. Considering we are a church choir in a small market town we have a decent reputation, due in large part to our excellent musical director, Paul Berry. We regularly sing at Sunday Mass, weddings and funerals, and on one occasion wangled an invitation to sing at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, better known as Paddy's wigwam.

When the first lockdown hit, St Mary's, like so many other places, had to shut, at which point livestream Mass took its place. The livestream regularly gets around over 1,000 views per week, from all parts of the world. It's particularly appreciated in parts of the world where Christians are persecuted, because people there feel they can be part of the service without putting themselves at risk.



The choir was asked to add music to the livestream, which was a challenge and a steep learning curve, and shifted us right out of our comfort zone. Paul would send the music we had to sing as both a sheet and an mp3 file, usually with separate parts. (I'm a bass. Ann is an alto.) We would listen on the ipad to our part through the ear of one headphone, whilst simultaneously recording our part on a mobile phone. You had to have one ear free to be able to hear what you were singing. It would sometimes take hours to get it right. It wouldn't have taken me long to fill a swear box. Effectively we were singing so-

lo, and there was nowhere to hide.

Amazingly it seemed to work, and work well. The feedback we got was quite complimentary. Here's a link to "If ye love me" by Thomas Tallis, if you would like to hear how we sound. You will be able to appreciate Paul's skill, not to mention blood, sweat and tears, in editing each individual recording to create the finished product. <http://resources.stmaryshexham.org.uk/Tallis.mp3>

When lockdown eased St Mary's reopened with a much reduced congregation attending, and a similarly reduced choir, usually 7 or 8 socially distanced members, singing live whilst also being livestreamed. It felt so good to be back in the choir gallery. Whilst not as difficult as the home recording, the reduced numbers presented different challenges. It's not easy for so few voices to fill as a big space as St Mary's, added to which any mistakes you made (plenty in my case) were glaringly obvious.

With Christmas fast approaching we wanted to do something in addition that would lift people's spirits. As congregational singing isn't allowed inside church we hit upon the idea of outdoor carol singing and a livestream carol service. The outdoor carol service was fairly straightforward,

(Continued on page 5)

using St Mary's First School carpark with socially distanced spacing and carol sheets. Fortunately the day long torrential rain stopped just in time, and the 100+ people who attended were in good voice. We all enjoyed the rare chance to be together, albeit at a distance.

The livestream service was an ambitious project. We wanted to involve the parishes in our partnership which stretches from Haltwhistle to Minsteracres, and Allendale to Otterburn. We managed to include snippets and interviews with parishioners, images from our area, readings from scripture and poems, with all ages from nursery school to octogenarians. We asked parishioners to record two of the carols at home, singing along with choir recordings, and we got a response from around the area, across the UK and even as far afield as Shanghai and Vancouver. The choir recorded the carols individually at home, and then we recorded them again live in St Mary's whilst being recorded on film.

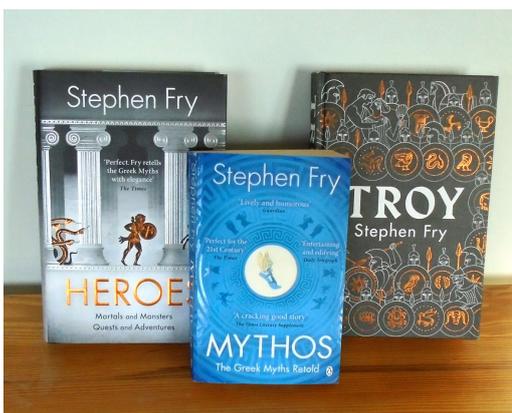
Paul had the herculean task of pulling all the live and individual recordings together, whilst Joe Ronan, our technical guru, moved mountains to record everything both at St Mary's and across the partnership and editing it all together. There were other folk working tremendously hard in the background to make it happen. In comparison the singing was the easy bit. I have to say their efforts were rewarded. The finished product looked and sounded professional. You can find it on you tube at St Mary's Hexham livestream. Look for "Words and Music for Christmas".

I think we've all missed the comradeship of the choir and that special feeling that singing together gives you. It has been hard work, but livestream has allowed us to reach out to our partnership parishes, the housebound, and to others around the world. It has been a privilege to take part and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Andrew Moore

These Mysterious Greeks

One of my Christmas presents was "Troy", the final book in the trilogy by Stephen Fry that covers the ancient myths of Greek prehistory. The other books being "Mythos" and "Heroes". The sequence starts with Mythos which describes the origins of the Greek gods and the titanic struggles that ended with Zeus and the other Olympians. Heroes, of course, covers Hercules, Theseus and the like, while the final book covers the events leading up to the siege and covers in full the ten years of the Trojan war.



The books are an easy read and Stephen Fry has produced a masterpiece that unites many of the myths into a readable narrative with copious explanatory notes. Each book can be read on its own but if you start with Mythos and finish with Troy, they present a lifelike picture of a complex story that takes the reader back into the mists of time but brings the legends to life. The explanatory notes are very helpful and do not detract from the story, while an excellent index allows one to quickly find a particular story.

I would thoroughly recommend these books to any one with a passing interest in mythology, they really bring the subject to life and leave one wondering how some of the myths originated and how the ancient Greeks really lived. Another book that enhances these three is "Circe" by Madeline Miller which covers the life of this minor goddess who chose to become a mortal.

John Dumbrell

TAKING STOCK AT THE BEGINNING OF 2021

The news, recently, is that the majority of the UK population will have received their Covid vaccinations by September as a further two new vaccines enter their final assessment before being authorised. The news also reported two consecutive days of the highest daily deaths since the pandemic began. The vaccines could allow life to start to get back to normal but I suspect it will be more the start of a new life. Life will not be the same for a while yet.

Jazz Festival.

How will this all affect Hexham Rotary? Distancing and masks may very well continue to be the norm. Mass gatherings will be controlled and limited. As the virus mutates then further new guidance will be issued. I suspect for the time being that events such as our planned Jazz Festival will not be possible for a while yet. Time will tell, but for the mean time planning for this event has to remain dormant and the potentially significant fundraising for cancer research postponed.

Tree Planting.

As the current 'lockdown' is likely to continue until March then the annual 'Tree Planting' programme sadly has to be postponed until the autumn. Both our partners, the County Council and the National Trust, understand our position that it is totally impractical to continue planning the event until circumstances change. I will ensure that the trees which we were to have been planted now will be looked after until then. We also look forward to our next batch of acorns germinating in the spring. I had a walk up to the Highford Park site recently and the trees we planted last year are doing very well. Ash Chalara (dieback) will devastate our local trees over the next decade and this project is to make sure we plant replacements.



Stamps for RNIB.

Thank you to everyone that has sent me used stamps for the RNIB collection – I have a very large bag full. If anyone else has any more used stamps then please send them to me. I will check to see if this can be a rolling project going forward.

Purple for Polio.

The final proceeds from the crocus project was £616 and this money will now be sent by our treasurer to RFUK for Polio Plus. Thank you all for your contributions. This project has the potential to be enhanced next year.

Local Charities.

Our many and varied fundraising initiatives over the years have helped provide valuable funds to local organisations and charities. Covid 19 has had an enormous affect on our ability to collect and raise money. The recent Sponsored Walk "Not the Great North Run", well organised by Miles our President, raised a magnificent £2500. Simple ideas such as this will enable us to continue to raise further sums for worthy causes. Some fundraising projects can be 'run from home', even during lockdown. Please send in your suggestions so that Council can consider them in the first instance. Thank you.

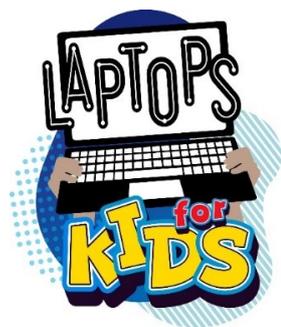


Excursions.

After the successful trip to Durham Cathedral and Harrison and Harrison Organ Factory last year I promised to organise another trip to The Farne Islands. It is too soon however to set a date and this may well have to be held over until next year.

Andrew Rigg. (Immediate Past President.)

Can you help Laptops for Kids Initiative?



Hexham Rotary is supporting this initiative to help with children's education and would urge all our members to help in any way they can.



A Cry for Help

Children here in the North East have already been hit by a triple-whammy of issues affecting their education, including disruption to their attendance, existing disadvantages and the digital divide. Recent analysis shows that at least 55,000 families in the North East do not have access to a laptop, tablet or desktop computer. Without your help, thousands of children could spend the next few weeks and months sat at home unable to learn - increasing the chances of a permanent impact on their education. With schools closed again for many learners, we are now in a race against the clock to help provide the necessary technology to all children to ensure that remote learning can take place. Too many children in the North East will need to attend school in person being classified as vulnerable - because they do not have the digital devices necessary to learn from home. This will place an even greater burden on schools and increases the risk of the virus spreading more widely. Schools are trying to keep pace with demand, but are struggling – this is where Laptops for Kids comes in.

The Laptops for Kids Initiative

The Northern Powerhouse Partnership is working with Northumbrian Water, The Newcastle Evening Chronicle, the Sunderland firm ReBuyer and WANdisco to launch Laptops for Kids in the North East. They are asking businesses and individuals across the North East region to donate used laptops, PCs, tablets and chargers, which will then be professionally wiped before they are distributed through schools to families in need. Identification of the most relevant schools and most needy children is being undertaken in conjunction with Local Authorities. The initiative was launched in mid-January and 1200 devices have already been donated or pledged, but many more are needed - and ReBuyer is prepared to repurpose 1000 devices per week at their own expense.

This initiative is supported by The Rotary Club of Hexham with particular relevance to our local community.

How Can I Donate My Laptop?

You are urged to have a dig around and see if you've got an old laptop that's gathering dust. Sending it along to Laptop for Kids means it can be brought back to life and potentially be a life-changing learning tool. The simplest way for you to donate your device is to fill in the form at www.ltfk.co.uk/northeast so as to pledge your donation. Then you can take it to a drop off point in the Co-op Store in Corbridge, Prudhoe or Haltwhistle. Hermes have agreed to fetch devices from these stores and to deliver to ReBuyer free of charge.

We Need Help From Businesses Too

There must be many businesses in our area with equipment which is surplus to requirements or out of date. Please take contact with businesses in the area who might like to inform all their staff of the initiative and, most importantly, who might have spare devices which they could donate in quantity – in which case let me know so that bespoke arrangements can be made for collection. Please email me blherdan@yahoo.co.uk

As Nigel Watson of Northumbrian Water said: "We believe that we can harness the community spirit of the North East to demonstrate that tackling digital poverty can be done in a sustainable way through collaboration and innovation. To learn more, and to fill out a form to donate unwanted kit, visit www.ltfk.co.uk/northeast

On behalf of the Rotary Club of Hexham we urge you to support this vital initiative for the sake of the disadvantaged members of our community.

Ben and Jan Herdan

Club Programme 2021 – subject to review

Key **Blue** are Club/District Meetings of a Business nature,

Yellow are Club Council Meetings

Date	Day	Time	Event	Topic
January 4 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	Wild Bees – Charlotte & Gordon Port of NNHS
January 11 th	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
January 13 th	Wednesday		Tree Planting	Postponed due to Covid
January 18 th	Monday	6.30	Club Meeting	Charlet Philips - Facebook
January 19 th	Tuesday		Tree Planting	Postponed due to Covid
February 1 st	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	Chris Harding - Photography
February 8 th	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
February 15 th	Monday	6.30	Business	Agenda items to the Secretary please
February 15 th	Monday		District Council	
February 23 rd	Tuesday		Rotary Day	
March 1 st	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	Sue Campbell – Read All About It. PR made Simple
March 8 th	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
March 15 th	Monday	6.30	Club Meeting	
March 29 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	Catherine Bush - Foundation
April 4 th	Easter	Sunday		
April 6 th	Tuesday	5.30	Club Council	
April 12 th	Monday	6.30	AGM	
April 18 th	Sunday	10 - 12	PEPS	For incoming Presidents
April 26 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	Mel Wall – The Boer War
May 3 rd	Monday	Bank	Holiday	
May 10 th	Monday	6.30	Club Meeting	
May 11 th	Tuesday		District Council	
May 13 th	Thursday		District Assembly	
May 17 th	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
May 24 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	
May 31 st	Monday	Bank	Holiday	
June 14 th	Monday	6.30	Club Assembly	Agree next Rotary year's programme
June 28 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	Presidents' Handover
July 5 th	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
July 12 th	Monday	6.30	Club Meeting	
July 26 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	
August 9 th	Monday	6.30	Club Meeting	
August 16 th	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
August 23 rd	Monday	12.30	Business	
August 30 th	Monday	Bank	Holiday	
September 6 th	Monday	6.30	Club Meeting	
September 13 th	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
September 20 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	
October 4 th	Monday	6.30	Club Meeting	
October 11 th	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
October 18 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	
November 1 st	Monday	6.30	SGM	Elect officers, approve accounts
November 15 th	Monday	12.30	Club Meeting	
November 22 nd	Monday	5.30	Club Council	
November 29 th	Monday	6.30	Club Meeting	
December 13 th	Monday	12.30	Xmas Lunch	