Editorial

As I write, the Coronavirus continues to cut a swathe through our lives. All activities are on hold, including Rotary. Each day seems to bring new restrictions, new policies, new predictions and those of us over seventy (which includes one or two of our members) are encouraged to self-isolate.

But that doesn’t mean we have to roll over, lock the door and wait for the storm to blow itself out. Already there are green Brigantes shoots. There are plans for some of us to have e-meetings. The Book Club wants to continue online. Phones continue to ring and emails to ping. We’re an ingenious lot, we enjoy each other’s company and we know how to support each other in difficult times.

I know it’s not Coronavirus but I’ve recently had a new knee fitted. “Nothing unusual about that”, you may say. “About time too”, others might say, who have seen me hobble round Rotary walks, grappling with gradients and stiles in a variety of unbecoming postures. The worst of it is it’s a painful business. The old adage ‘No gain without pain’ was never more apposite. But it has another salutary effect: it disrupts your life. You simply can’t do what you normally do and you can become depressingly familiar with four walls.

Which is where Rotary, or more specifically Brigantes, stepped in. Hospital visits, popping round for a cuppa and a chat, a phone call, out for a coffee, ‘Get Well’ cards, a chance meeting and good wishes and a great welcome on the prodigal’s return – I’ve had them all (thank you) and, while they’re not all appropriate just now, they all serve to show a vital ingredient in Brigantes, that we care about each other. It’s not effusive or flamboyant but it’s a steady understanding that we’ll be there for each other when it matters. David, our Almoner, gives a magnificent lead and is selfless in the support he gives to club members. And, while not wishing to over-egg it, there’s a heartbeat in Brigantes that binds us and provides an invaluable support network when it’s needed.

I well remember Michael Crosby introducing me to Brigantes. I scarcely knew anyone but I was immediately made to feel at home and the warmth of the welcome I received has remained with me ever since. Of course Rotary is about looking outwards, working to support communities locally, nationally and internationally. But it’s also about looking out for each other, about ‘being there’, about showing, often in small but important ways, that we care.

And it’s never been more vital than now.

Peter Wearmouth

A Message from President Peter

The situation throughout the world and within the UK is very worrying. We cancelled Charter Evening a couple of weeks ago and since then matters have moved at pace. The advice from Government is clear to all of us and therefore we have moved to cancel all our meetings.

We are in discussions about how we can keep in contact with you all, and how we can support Club members if the need arises.

Can I wish you all good health in the coming weeks and months.

My best wishes to you and your families.

Peter Wearmouth

Christmas Grotto

It seems a long time ago now but Brigantes Christmas Grotto took place at Asda Supermarket, Harrogate between 12 – 22 December, having been organized by David Russell. A total of £4,124 was collected and was divided between Parkinsons, Yorkshire Air Ambulance, Dementia Forward and the Club’s own charity account.

Well done to all concerned and especially to David.
Tax Care and Toy Boys

Several members might have been disappointed at the balance struck between these twin themes. There was rather a lot on tax care and wills and not much on toy boys. In fact their only appearance was in a warning not to make your legacy vulnerable to a fancy man or femme fatale, lest their children hijack it all. Other than that it was a compendium of good advice about putting and keeping your affairs in order from Caroline, representing a local firm of solicitors.

The headlines were timely. In a will, legacies come first. Plan now for your funeral; costs double every ten years. We’re perhaps all aware of the eye-watering costs of care. Did you know that it’s cheaper to travel on the Queen Mary than to pay for care? Or that 100 houses are sold every day to finance care?

There was also a wealth of advice on Enduring Power of Attorney, Tenants in Common and Inheritance Tax. It was all good practical guidance and a reminder of the old aphorism that nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes. Later that evening there was the sound all over Harrogate of drawers being opened for the first time in years and the dust being blown off wills. Just to check.

January Walk

January – especially the sort of January we had – is not necessarily a time for heroics up the Dales, so we settled for a modest Studley ramble starting in Ripon. Eight of us, including honorary Rotarian Jet, braved the mud but drew the line at trying to navigate the slurry path at Hill House Farm which is deep and noxious at the best of times. Instead we took to the valley of the Seven Bridges where we encountered the local pheasant shoot and, unlike a pile of birds, survived the experience.

One of the beauties of Studley, and there are many, is that there are routes galore. With a Visitor Assistant and two Guides in our midst, all were in play. We settled on a circuit of the Deer Park starting at the Obelisk and took lunch, not for the first time on a Rotary walk, at the bridge over the dry valley. It was cold. The nagging pains struck through and off we went at a good lick down to Studley Roger and back to the cars. By popular demand, tea was taken. We had a sizeable table to ourselves at the Fountains Visitor Centre and, long after the tea had gone cold we were still there putting the world to rights. Storm Brendan, which had threatened all day, unleashed its fury once we were safely in the cars but by that time we had the cozy glow of hot showers in our sights and all was well with the world.

Park Life

Sue Wood, the Horticultural Officer from Harrogate Council Parks Department gave us the low-down on those magnificent floral displays and much more. Most of the plants start out at the nursery at Harlow Hill which has been producing them for over a hundred years. Currently eleven greenhouses and nine poly-tunnels produce 400,000 plants per year to entertain and amaze the 3.3m visitors that Harrogate pulls in annually. The stats are mind-blowing. 95% of all the bedding-out plants for our District are grown here. There are 15,000 trays just for polyanthus, of which 60,000 are grown every year. Over 600 baskets and troughs are produced each year. If you want a themed display this year, don’t bother. You’re too late. All the 2020 displays were sorted by November and already the plants are under cultivation.

The Valley Gardens, the Stray, those glorious beds and islands would be impressive enough on their own. Add in all the trees, ten cemeteries, ten allotment sites, market stalls and a host of other responsibilities and you begin to appreciate the scope of what Sue does. And of course it isn’t just in Harrogate. Displays around the whole District, including Knaresborough and Ripon, are hers to plan and execute.

Inevitably we returned to the dreadful state of West Park Stray after the UCCI cycling event and the severe weather which nobody could have predicted. Sue made the point that not a lot can be done until the end of March at the earliest. Grass will not germinate until the temperature reaches around 10˚C and that isn’t going to happen any time soon. Part of the problem is that most of the Stray comprises good old Harrogate clay topped by a very thin layer of soil. So the water just sits there. Some drainage improvements are being made but basically Sue and the rest of us will just have to wait until the weather improves. As I look out, it’s raining. It rained yesterday and it’s going to rain tomorrow. It could be a long wait.

Thanks to Sue for a fascinating talk and for keeping our District looking so great.
A Walk in the Woods

The Book Club’s January offering was part-time American and erstwhile Yorkshireman Bill Bryson’s epic account of his trek along the 2,155 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Or was it 2,144, or 2,118.3 or 2,164.9? No one seems to know and since it’s being continually re-routed, it doesn’t seem to matter. In any case Bill doesn’t walk it – at least not all of it; indeed less than half of it. But it’s still a tale well worth telling and, as you’d expect, he extracts every ounce of human interest and humour from the 870 miles he does complete.

And this is no cinch. Walking through the woods on a summer day with the birds twittering and shafts of sunlight picking out the bluebells it is not. From Georgia up to Maine, it winds its way through mountains, rivers, precipices, ravines and woods, and woods, and woods. There are few views because of . . . . the woods. But there’s plenty of weather. Early spring (or is it late winter?) brings rain, wind, snow – the complete wrath of the gods. It also brings a remarkable cast of weirdo fellow-walkers – you have to be zany to attempt the trail – who seem to monopolise the spartan overnight accommodation huts most of which, curiously, seem to have one side completely open.

Then there’s Katz. Katz belongs to Bryson’s early life in Des Moines and he’s the last person who should be attempting the Trail. Overweight, crotchety and given to sudden impulses, he seems to spend much of the trip offloading supplies in a bid to lighten his load – including, infamously, his water. Bill spends much of his time waiting for him, retrieving him and on one occasion, losing him for a full day and night. They spend days barely on speaking terms and end up consoling each other. Their big fear is bears. They’ve heard lots of stories about them. They never actually encounter one – very few do – but the fear serves to give them sleepless nights and raised anxiety levels.

Through it all shines the Bryson humour, the ability to isolate the curious, the bizarre, the offbeat. His utter lack of knowledge about the finer points of walking equipment enlivens the first chapter. His encounters with the bossy Mary Ellen, the visit to the ravaged town of Centralia, his fascination with the history of the Trail and his vendetta against the inadequacies of the National Parks Service enlivens an account which is so much more than a plod through the woods.

OK they don’t walk it all. But I reckon we have a far better book for that. It’s an honest chronicle of their challenges, their suffering and their occasional elation told with warmth and good humour. It’s an engaging read and we’d thoroughly recommend it.

Malcolm the Weaver

Malcolm Campbell, a member of Harrogate Rotary Club gave us an insight into his fifty-year career in weaving (mainly Harris Tweed and Worsted Cloth) following a five year apprenticeship in Scotland from 1969 to 1974.

He has travelled the world developing, creating and selling innovative new cloth that no one had thought of designing before. In 2006 he was awarded three major accolades from the industry culminating in an invitation to meet the Queen in 2010. He introduced himself as Malcolm, a Weaver from Scotland, prompting the Queen to say to Prince Philip, “This is ‘Malcolm the Weaver’ - and he’s never looked back! The Queen also gave him permission to use the Balmoral Tartan as a basis for creating the Callanish Tartan, the only registered Harris Tweed Tartan.

He’s taken weaving in to the classroom with his beautifully illustrated books, the first in 2014, ‘Weaver of a Life in Colour’ for four to eight-year-olds. More books followed, all illustrated by his daughter Sharon. He is currently working on a TV series with the BBC in Scotland.

An expert in his field he has accomplished much in his career and continues to use his knowledge and expertise to educate young children not only about the art of weaving but also about the wonders of nature, the emotion of colour and caring for the planet.

Kelvin Burkinshaw
Rotary Technology Tournament 2020

Rotary Clubs from Harrogate, Ripon, Knaresborough and Lower Wharfedale again facilitated the 2020 Tournament. Schools taking part were Ashville College, Harrogate Grammar, King James’s, Nidderdale High, Ripon Grammar, Rossett School, St Aidan’s High, St John Fisher High and Wetherby High.

The students, working in teams of four in three age categories, were given a task and were supplied with basic materials such as card, wheels, pulleys, wood dowel, string and drawing pins. Students brought basic hand tools to use in the construction phase. The task, which was secret until the day of the tournament, is based on the design and construction of a model. The model was scored against several criteria to establish the winner.

The difficulty of the Task increased with the age of the students in the teams involved, from Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 (Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced) respectively. In each age group an award was given for the best portfolio and a Gold, Silver and Bronze award for the three teams which provided the best solutions to the task.

Our own David Russell, who co-ordinated the Tournament, said, “The challenge combines a number of skills in a fun way. As well as design technology and making skills, the students have to call on innovation, team working, communication, problem solving, decision making, risk taking and creativity to achieve their goal. They also produce a written design and construction portfolio to show how they arrived at the finished model and finally demonstrate the working model to the judges under test conditions. They are marked on all these criteria”.

In each age group an award is given for the Best Portfolio and a Gold, Silver and Bronze award for the three teams which provide the best solutions to the task. The Gold Award at Foundation Level was won by St Aidan’s High School, and at Intermediate and Advanced Levels by Ashville College, but all schools and their teams shared in the success of the day and can be proud of what they achieved.

David Crowther

March Walk

The Great Rains did not deter the walkers though they did limit the scope of their activities. The fields and countryside being distinctly squelchy, the round walk of Fewston and Swinsty reservoirs provided firm and relatively dry ground and, as the picture shows, even some sunshine.

Thanks Kelvin for organising

Mike Calvert

Some excellent news about Mike who is now feeling much better and is back home.
David Davis has already taken us through Britain’s sticky post-war relations with Europe. Now he was in more ruminative, more nostalgic mood as we cantered through a time that many of us can recall but which is in truth a world away.

‘Back to normal’ after the war meant many things to many people. For many men it meant digging the garden, aided by the tips of Adam the Gardener, courtesy of the ‘Daily Express’. It meant taking pride in your front lawn (before it was taken over as parking space), it meant prefabs, it meant boys hurtling down precipitous hills on bogeys. It was a time of hope and optimism, of the Festival of Britain and the Skylon and spindly domestic furniture.

There were, David pointed out, queues for everything and the British have always been good at queuing. Rationing lasted until the mid-fifties, trains were crowded, beaches were packed. Men paddled in three-piece suits with rolled trousers and carried their boots while the kids watched non-PC Punch and Judy shows. Railway adverts, many from the 1930s, advertised exotic British holidays. Butlins, having been requisitioned during the war once more opened its doors to happy families, with indoor swimming pools, Walls Ice Cream and knobbly knees competitions.

The young now had money. BSA motorbikes (Rockers) vied with Vespa scooters ( Mods). The cars, especially the diminutive Austin A35, not to mention the Bubblecar and the Mini, now seem tiny. Ah, the Mini. But don’t expect a sigh of nostalgia from David. For him it was the worst designed car ever, abysmally engineered, a rust-heap with doors that were pulled closed with string.

Television was supposed to spell the end for the cinema but, in spite of the 1953 coronation, Muffin the Mule and Dixon of Dock Green, it never did. News was filtered through the fruity tones of Pathé and the pages of Picture Post. Most people smoked and the adverts for Woodbines, Navy Cut and Senior Service were everywhere. But radio – there lies true nostalgia. ITMA, the Goons, Hancock – there lay a slab of popular culture whose like we shall not see again.

So it was that David brought his ship to harbour with 1959 and the Teddy Boys, a general Election which proclaimed, “You’ve never had it so good” and small boys in shorts train-spotting. Nostalgia may not be what it used to be but, thanks to David, we had a good forty-minute wallow.

Angela Smith – ASDA’s Angel

Angela is well known to we Rotarians but the Brigand has wider journalistic ambitions these days, so a little more background is required. ASDA regards its role in the community as a primary business objective. However it is not highly publicised. Angela is paid to give twenty hours’ work to the community each week, which she does with some gusto. She works with many key local charities, such as St Peters’ Breakfast Club and the food parcel scheme. She has several budgets but the main one is exclusively for Harrogate. The stores throughout the UK combine efforts for national charities and some of the beneficiaries are Breast Cancer, Yorkshire Air Ambulance (Yorkshire is practically a nation) and of course Children in Need.

We were regaled with some amusing tales about Pudsey visiting local schools and the difficulties of maintaining the Pudsey legend. The Pudsey suit makes navigation rather difficult. Also it is impossible to get into a car wearing it. Rather than give the game away Pudsey had to walk to a location where no child would see him remove his head, which turned out to be a long, very long, walk in the somewhat stuffy suit. Angela also runs store visits for local school children which are very popular, particularly working on the checkouts. Who would have thought that?

In answer to a question about shop lifting we were treated to two amusing tales. The first involved the culprit hiding a box of choc ices down his trouser front. Security with a natural sense of justice decided the ice creams would have to stay in place until the police arrived. The other tale was about a 45” TV being taken from the store. Later enquiries determined that one of the stores “greeters” had helped the culprit to put it in his car. In both cases ASDA came off better than the culprits. Other questions involved recycling and there is a drive to reduce plastics in place, although Angela was somewhat sceptical about a self-service trial for dry goods like cornflakes. Her view was witty, but you had to be there to appreciate it! Importantly all surplus perishable foodstuffs are donated immediately to appropriate local charities.

This was an informal, witty and informative talk from one of the Club’s friends, which made for a relaxed and enjoyable evening.

Manuel Camacho
February Walk

Storm Ciara caused a change of plan to the intended walk over the moors above Summerbridge and Low Laithe, instead four of us, Guy, Bruce, John and myself with Jet set off from Ripley to explore the lower reaches of the Nidderdale Way on a bright but blustery morning. Heading out of Ripley we picked up Birthwaite Lane and ascended Scarah Moor before dropping in to Cayton Gill and up the moor again to a coffee stop at Kettle Spring. Then it was onwards along the Nidderdale Way which followed Thornton Beck into Shaw Mills at which point we turned for home along Law Lane to Bedlam. Then we continued on towards the deer park and Sadler Carr, the site of a 13th/14th medieval fortified manor house called Dark Hall and finally skirted Ripley Castle for a very welcome pot of tea and a teacake in the cafe. A great walk on one of the better days of the week.

Graham Chilvers

Kelvin’s Quiz – No1: 2020

You mean you actually don’t know where St George is buried? Or the name of Capt Pugwash’s ship, or that Mohammed Ali was beaten by Ken Norton or that the Small Faces sang about Itchycoo Park (yes, I have checked the spelling) or that Goodwood is in Sussex? Well you need to get out more – or better still join Brigantes in time for Kelvin’s next quiz which will (a) blow your mind and (b) on mature reflection reveal how little you actually do know.

Thus it was that brains, or what’s left of them, were given a severe work out, the mental equivalent of trying to run a four-minute mile when your training has consisted of a walk to the paper shop and back. Nevertheless all was done with great good humour, the winners were lauded and rewarded, and Kelvin presided over it all with his customary cool impartiality – understandable because, having set the questions, he knew all the answers.

Thanks Kelvin for another whizzer of a quiz.

Free Walking Tour

You must have seen him and been intrigued – a lone figure by the Cenotaph, signboard in hand, advertising free walking tours of Harrogate. Who is he? What’s he up to?

We found out when he came and talked to us. He’s Harry Satloka, born in Spain, grew up in Devon, moved to London, former Head Butler at the Ritz. Moved to Harrogate. What to do? Cunning plan: Free walking tours.

It makes sense when you think about it. If you advertise your tour at £5 a head you’d probable get one man and a dog. But advertise them as ‘Free’ (that most seductive of words) and they pile in, enjoy the 1½ hour experience and leave a handsome tip – of, say £5. It must work because he does it four times a day with full permission from Harrogate Council.

Of course it did need some mugging up. Harry will be the first to admit that he had a season ticket for the local Reference Library but it paid off. We had our own PowerPoint tour and he certainly knew his stuff. From the discovery of the first spring by William Slingsby in 1571, to the Stray (250 years old this year – and certainly looking it at the moment), to Farrah’s toffee, developed to take away the foul taste of the ‘waters’ and on to the Valley Gardens, formerly the Bogs Fields, which contain a greater number of unique springs than anywhere in the world – we were with Harry all the way. We stopped off at the Royal Baths, the Sun Colonnade, several hotels including our own Crown and the Royal Hall, host to such diverse talents as the Beatles, explorer Ernest Shackleton and Kids Aloud (though he didn’t mention that one).

So here’s a thought: How about a bespoke Brigantes summer tour with Harry on one of those warm, languid Tuesday evenings we dream about once Coronavirus is over. I’m sure he’d be up for it.
THE BRIGAND

Who Lived in a House Like This?

Alex Degier does. He’s a family historian and, as in the TV programme ‘A House Through Time’, he’s investigated the previous occupants of his house. Alex lives in Knaresborough and his house was built in 1898, proving that a property doesn’t have to be very old to have a fascinating history.

The house has been through various guises. As well as a straightforward domestic dwelling, it had a period as Sunnyholme School for Girls (Proprietor Mrs C Prescott) and another as a Nursing Home, either of which may account for the fading inscription ‘Night Bell’ in the porch.

It was when Alex began investigating previous occupants and their families that things really took off. Incredibly this one house encompassed, inter alia, the families of the inventor of the concertina who also sang with the D’Oyly Carte opera company, a man who bought the Coalport pottery and built the first railway to Ipswich and the man who invented the Hardcastle torpedo. Not bad for less than a hundred years, before Alex bought the house in 1989. He paid £134,000 for a property that sold for £2,000 in 1953.

Alex was at pains to point out that his research wasn’t expensive. He did use ‘Find My Past’, a popular commercial site but much of his research was conducted on FreeBMD and via the GRO online index. Family history, as I well know, can be addictive. What Alex demonstrated is that the thrill of the chase can produce the most unexpected and entertaining results. Altogether a fascinating piece of sleuthing.

Over to you. Who lived in your house?

and finally

Dorothy Parker (1893-1967) was an American poet who had a fine line in acerbic wit. How about these?

“I like to have a martini, two at the very most
After three I’m under the table, after four I’m under my host.”

“Brevity is the soul of lingerie.”

On Katherine Hepburn’s stage performance: “She ran the gamut of emotions from A to B.”

“If you want to know what God thinks of money, just look at the people he gave it to.”

That would be a good thing to cut on my tombstone: “Wherever she went, including here, it was against her better judgement.”

“Constant use had not worn ragged the fabric of their friendship.”

“Take me or leave me; or, as is the usual order of things, both.”

“Their pooled emotions wouldn’t fill a teaspoon.”

“I’d rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy.”

“It serves me right for putting all my eggs in one bastard.”

“The best way to keep your children at home is to make the home atmosphere pleasant and let the air out of the tyres.”

“If all the girls attending [the Yale prom] were laid end to end, I wouldn’t be surprised”

And Absolutely Finally (courtesy of the Times)

A reader reported that a dress designer in Hampshire made a dress out of 1,000 pages of the Daily Mail. And the name of this woman who wants to be wrapped in newspaper? Madeleine Haddock

(Well I liked it!!)