

THE BRIGAND



Editor : Peter Wood

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Editorial

These are busy days.

First, the legacy. After many discussions we've finally identified a way forward thanks in large measure to Nicola Stamford from Big Bamboo who has not only pointed us in the right direction but inspired us and undertaken to work with us. We're fortunate to have such a high-quality professional input. We've seen her presentation, we're keeping quiet about it at the moment and we're looking forward to a blockbuster launch in the New Year. And that, of course depends on

.the new website. This seems to have been in preparation for an age but it's no small matter to design a completely new site – which Dave Calvert is doing – and then to put in all the background and current information and, most importantly, make the necessary arrangements to ensure it's kept up-to-date. The website project team, and in particularly Charlotte Gale, are working hard to get it online.

Finally, all organisations need, from time to time, to review what they do, and how and why they do it. President Bill has decided, quite rightly, that it's time for Brigantes to take a good look at itself. Seven members have volunteered to consider, amongst other things, our meetings, venue(s) and the hoary, but significant, questions of membership and attendance.

Amid all this the day-to-day life of Brigantes continues. We've just had a wonderful RYLA evening, a very successful and moving Remembrance Service and planning is underway for the Technology Tournament in March. In and amongst we've recently made donations to Supporting Older People, Shelterbox and Aquabox and we look forward to helping more good causes in 2024.

Busy days indeed!

In the meantime from Graham and from me – all the very best to you and your families for Christmas and the New Year.

Peter Wood

OPINION

Saying Grace is an anachronism.

You may have heard recently that Lincoln's Inn has dropped the saying of grace to be "more inclusive." They went ever further and deemed the saying of grace to be "an anachronism." As you might imagine some Big Wigs find this hard to swallow. Andrea Williams, the chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre accused Lincoln's Inn of betraying its roots in the rich and living tradition of the faith.

We recognise that lawyers might be Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu or of no particular faith at all so perhaps they have a point. The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Vos, the Master of the Rolls and the Treasurer of Lincoln's Inn said, "It is a priority to continue to enhance the relevance of the inn to all our members and build an increasingly inclusive environment."

All of this seems pertinent to us as a Rotary club. We too are a mixed group of men and women some of whom are faithful members of various churches and others who are not. We can hear the dilemma some members have when asked to say grace and they find themselves treading the delicate balance between giving thanks to God and saying "Thank you for our dinner".

There is I think a way ahead that will avoid embarrassment and give us all the opportunity to be true to ourselves. Lincoln's Inn will now use the words, "In this moment of silence, let us give thanks for all we are about to receive and for the company of this Honourable Society."

Well Amen to that. I think that is what we are largely doing now at Brigantes but we can be more confident in using a form of words we are each comfortable with.

David Hoskins.

[Thanks for that David.

Do YOU have an OPINION about something we do or don't do in Rotary? David's article could be the first in an occasional feature. Get it off your chest by writing to the Editor!]

Christmas Party

Christmas was celebrated in style at the Crown with welcome drinks, a three-course meal, entertainment by Bethany Harby and friends who also accompanied our carol singing and Benjamin Zephania's poetic injunction to "be nice to your turkey this Christmas." Finally David Hoskins' traditional Christmas message (and traditional nativity joke) sent us off in good heart for the festive season.

Thanks to Tony and Diane for their work in organising a great evening



THE BRIGAND

The Wet Woods of Helmsley

Walking seems to be going out of fashion. Or was it the weather, infirmity or illness? A bit of everything, perhaps. But on Monday 14 August only two of the walking group actually walked. Now, as you may recall, that was not a good day, with record amounts of rain falling in parts of Yorkshire. But, stalwart or foolish, John Wood and Guy Wilson braved the elements to walk north from Helmsley. And they were rewarded.

It was raining when they set off and was pelting when they returned but most of the route was walked in the dry and no precipitation spoiled a lunch, peaceful except for the passing of a giant tractor which then stopped for the driver to lean back, open the rear window of the cab and enquire with a smile as to whether he had missed our toes! It was a new, uncharted route, but only one wrong turn was taken – the first. Following the angle of the finger post turned out to be an error – we should instead have followed the little yellow arrow on the upright. But once on the correct path within a minute there was no evidence around that Helmsley existed as we plunged deep into woods along a stream. The way led beside Elton Gill and then into Collier Hag Wood. Most was gentle until a steep rise brought us to the top of the valley and out onto the lower slopes of Rievaulx Moor with stunning views despite the mist over to the Wolds.

The return was down the deep ravine-like, Ash Dale. Being so few the only thing we lacked (as, for some unaccountable reason, we met no one) was photographic proof of our exploits, for which apologies. With so few of us even walking at the pace of the slower we made much better time than on more populated walks, but this turned out to be a major disadvantage.

We arrived back at Wilson's café to find the cake just coming out of the oven. So tea was drunk while the cake cooled a bit and icing was put into the Victoria Sponge. The icing promptly melted but taken as a warm pudding the cake was most welcome. It took two days for my rucksack to dry out but, despite all, a good time was had.

So, come on, next time, why not join us?

Guy Wilson



Helmsley Castle (on a fine day)

Alex Carberry at York Minster

We heard an excellent talk by Alex Carberry the Head Verger (an Old Testament term). His duty is to facilitate and prepare for worship, in other words to prepare everything for the preacher. He is assisted by five vergers and 500 volunteers. The aim is for the vergers to remain invisible, ensuring that all runs smoothly. Alex, who is Head Verger, has been part of the Minster staff for over 30 years. There is a link to Brigantes. In 2020 we took a group of Nepali children to York and they were amazed to talk to one of the Minster policemen who happened to be from Nepal. York Minster is the only cathedral with its own police force.

York Minster is one of the world's most magnificent cathedrals completed in 1472 after several centuries of building. It is the second largest gothic cathedral in Europe. The nave contains the great west window completed in 1328 and the great east window completed in 1408, the latter being the largest expanse of medieval stained glass in the world. During the 20thC work was carried out to strengthen the building's foundations and roof. On the 9th July 1984 the Minster suffered a serious fire possibly caused by a lightning strike. A huge restoration project was carried out, being completed in 1988 at a cost of £2.25m.

We also heard about the human side of the Minster – how the vergers are there organising life's special moments. Mention was made of Jason the Mason! The late Queen visited the Minster in 1972 and 2012, her Jubilee year. King Charles has also been given a private tour of the building recently.

Alex gave us a most informative talk with lots of good humour and made us want to visit the Minster again soon.

Ruth Townrow



Alex in his robes of office

An Idler's Guide to Retirement

If ever there was misnomer this was it. Guy Wilson is no idler and his retirement is more vigorous than some working lives. However he brought us up to date with three of his current projects which are presumably part of his answer to the question "What are you doing now Kids Aloud is on pause?"

Two of the three revolve around Ripon. Guy's appointment as Chair of the Fabric Advisory Committee at the Cathedral coincided with being asked to review a book on 'The Evolution of the English Crossbow' which in turn led him to investigate Ripon crossbow makers – you see how one thing can lead to another. The city was famous for its crossbows but no one had named any individual makers. Guy found a 1680 indenture and the name of William Hesleton who lived at Plumpton Hall only a stone's throw from Fountains Abbey. And on the Wakeman's chain he identified not only the image of a crossbow but some spurs, for the manufacture of which Ripon was also famous. Eventually he had identified 144 craftsmen working in the city and the outlying villages.

So that was that. Then we were transported to London and the Worshipful Company of the Armourers and Braziers. Established in 1322 it meets in the Armourers' Hall. Guy played part of a podcast about its history and showed snippets of a recent conference of experts from around the world. The Hall is now being refurbished and all the items it owns – and there are a lot – are being catalogued, cleaned and the photographed by Guy. He showed us how reducing the amount of light could actually enhance the detail on some items thus helping to clarify their provenance. There's also a book, '700 years in 70 Objects' and the podcast is available on the Armourers and Braziers website.



Right: The Wakeman's horn provides evidence of the importance of metalworking in Ripon



Left: One of the many armours Guy has been photographing during renovation work at Armourers Hall - an infantry armour of the mid-16th century made in the German city of Nuremberg

Then it was back to Ripon. There are plans to build 1,300 houses on the Ripon Army site. The part it played in WW1 and especially the links with the poet Wilfred Owen are well known. What is less appreciated is the importance of the Deverel and Claro Barracks in WW2. These are a unique set of military buildings where British and American engineers trained. Here the famous Bailey Bridge was perfected which was instrumental in the allied invasion of Europe and it has been argued that, but for the training that took place in Ripon, the D-Day landings could not have taken place as they did. That training capacity even extended into the Cold War. Guy is involved with the Ripon Military Heritage Trust which aims to keep at least some of the remaining barracks, the only ones which survive in their original form. They're up against the developers, always a powerful lobby, but they draw some hope from the fact that the new unitary authority is going to produce an updated housing plan for our area and that, as part of the process, their voice may be heard.

And if all that is being idle I can't imagine what full steam ahead looks like



Mike Hammond presents a cheque for £500 from Brigantes to Supporting Older People

Social Media and Brigantes.

With the new website on the stocks it was timely that our own Charlotte Gale, an accomplished user of social media, should talk to us on the subject and underline its importance in getting us noticed, recruiting new members and making the most of the website which is costing us a lot of money but which will be worth every penny if we fully exploit its potential.

A bit of context first. 57.1m people in the UK as of January 2023 are active on social media. This represents 84.4% of the population. 73% are on Facebook/ Instagram, the most popular platform. Both Harrogate and Knaresborough Rotary Clubs are very active on social media. Charlotte did some online demonstrations, talking about the key platforms Facebook, Twitter (now X) Instagram, Instagram Reel and LinkedIn.

When using social media always ask permission to use pictures. Use platforms to promote events and projects such as charities and good causes supported and, where possible, include videos and statistics. Share relevant online news, including news snippets about activities such as the book club or club walks. Link with other events and dates – national events such as Christmas, charities supported, collaborations with local businesses, testimonials resulting from donations.

Features around meeting new and existing club members can foster membership recruitment interest. Information about speakers and subjects help to demonstrate the social side of the club. Requests for sponsors or for charities needing support emphasises our work in the community. Our associate members can be invited to contribute. We can post information about Rotary locally, nationally and internationally.

How can we reach more people? One key way is to share content and to reply to comments and 'likes', encouraging family and friends to get the ball rolling. Videos, photos and weblinks are important; visual impact is vital. We can share information to other facebook groups and post our own likes and comments.

There were lots of questions. Charlotte emphasised that doing social media is not rocket science but it is time-consuming. She was confident that we have a great source of content, particularly via the Brigand, but it will need preparing and posting.

Charlotte's was an excellent presentation and it emphasised how much work will be necessary if we are get best value from our new website.

David Read

RYLA

RYLA was such an amazing experience; from that week I have made so many close friends and learnt valuable lessons that I will use throughout my life.

Whenever I recount my adventure completing the Rotary Youth Leadership Award, I always describe it as "one of the most demanding but also rewarding weeks". This really sums it up. For all the effort I put into RYLA, getting up early and completing difficult tasks with people I had only just met, I got ten times as much out of it. After working together whilst building ziplines, bridges, hiking with stretcher equipment and rowing handmade rafts, my group emerged as the overall winners. I'm still so proud of what we achieved.

I cannot thank Harrogate Brigantes enough for sponsoring me and giving me this opportunity. It was unforgettable, and I will always remember RYLA. When presenting to you all with Matilda, I almost got a little emotional being able to thank you all in person. I hope you all know just how much this meant to me.

So, at the risk of sounding repetitive, thank you all again and I hope next years' awardees enjoy RYLA as much as I did.

Niamh Armstrong (Ashville College)

Niamh and Matilda with their parents, RYLA staff and Brigantes Rotarians



Charlotte with President Bill



L-R Peter Wood, Keith Prichard, Joanna Griffin, Simon Griffin, Matilda Griffin, Rtn David Price (Matilda's mentor), Niamh Armstrong, Rtn Cindy Stephenson (Niamh's mentor), Lucy Hodgson (RYLA Course Director), Zara Armstrong, Keith Armstrong

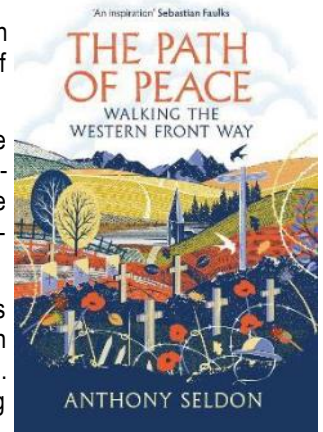
THE BRIGAND

The Path of Peace

This book is subtitled 'Walking the Western Way' and that's the challenge well-known writer Anthony Seldon set himself in 2021. The Book Club discussed it on the last day of August 2023 assisted by Oakdale Golf Club's customary hospitality.

The Western Way was the brainchild of Douglas Gillespie who, along with his brother Tom, was killed in the first World War. He envisaged a 'Via Sacra' which would follow the course of the front line from the French-Swiss border in the east to the English Channel and which would be walked by those wishing to contemplate not only the events of the war but the futility of such conflict. Along the way the route visits the scenes of appalling battles and the cemeteries and monuments which commemorate them.

So Anthony Seldon sets himself a difficult task, made more challenging by what some of us perceived as his chronic lack of organisation. In some ways he makes life difficult for himself by a lack of preparation and an apparent lack of awareness of what such a 35-day pilgrimage – for that is essentially what it is – will entail. Thus his journey is a catalogue of missed schedules, changes of route, physical suffering and an overarching anxiety as to whether he will actually complete it on time.



Sir Anthony Seldon

self-regarding and pretentious.

He does what he can to ease the pain. Many days end with a pre-booked taxi to a hotel in a town where he can dine well (often with the ubiquitous Sarah, who he eventually marries), starting the next day with a taxi ride to his point of departure. So it's not the Pennine Way but nevertheless he does complete the walk. He covers 1,000 kilometers and deserves our respect for that. Moreover he provides a fascinating travelogue and an account of many of the most horrific encounters of the First World War as seen through the eyes of individual soldiers. He visits numerous graves and memorials to the fallen. His journey is not only a pilgrimage; it is a contemplation of the nature of war and it raises awareness of the Western Way.

Anthony Seldon is not in a good place when he starts. His wife has died, he has no permanent home and no job. As a former head of three prestigious public schools, a much-published writer and a much-sought after interviewee, he isn't exactly down on his uppers but he treats the walk as some kind of personal soul-searching. Quite what he's looking for isn't clear so we don't really know whether he finds it. But the effect is that he tends to force himself into the narrative in a way which most of us found to be

So, it's a book which most of us thought certainly had its positives but one which would probably have been a better read with more of the Path of Peace and rather less of Anthony Seldon.

Accidents Will Happen

Indeed they will – and do. And Roy Tate, Past President of Otley Chevin RC was the man to recount them. Having worked for a number of years in the insurance industry he was able to tell us all about the relevant legislation. But the fascinating bits were the stories – some amusing and, some, sadly tragic.

Take the lady who had a chip pan fire. In spite of numerous campaigns about how to handle such emergencies, she made things worse by throwing water on the flames. Her next move was to run through the house with the pan, setting fire to carpets and furnishings en route. Finally she threw the contents through the window just as a neighbour who, having heard the commotion, was coming up the path and got flaming oil in her face. The outcome, interestingly, was an insurance claim for furnishings but, unlike today, no personal claim for the neighbour who, thankfully was discharged with no life-changing injuries.

Of course many injuries are work-related. Nowadays, and quite rightly, there's a plethora of risk assessments, employee training, certification, and safety equipment. One of the main areas of claims in the days before ear defenders was for deafness brought on by prolonged working in the heavy metal industries.

Another claim was for a fatality in Sheffield when, against all training and advice, an employee put his head into a large press which shaped pen knives to see why it was stuck. The inevitable happened and a gory scene resulted. A long debate followed about fault versus prevention. A London barrister called in by the company to defend it had to tell a hard-nosed MD that the law was in place "to protect the stupid against the consequences of their stupidity" and that they would have to pay up.

There were a final few tales involving injuries being caused by individuals circumventing processes, safety precautions and guards. On one occasion a group CEO was visiting and work needed to be done high up to tidy the plant. It was thought to be a good idea to ascend in a metal basket on the end of an extended forklift. Unfortunately the basket tilted and the young family man in it fell with life-changing injuries. On the return visit with the insurers the CEO was showing them round when an overloaded forklift shot through flexible doors, spilling heavy parts and almost killing the three visitors. Needless to say the MD and his H&S Officer were dismissed.

So the message has to be – go carefully and obey all the rules.

David Read



Tony, Roy Tate and President Bill

Meet the DG

The local great and good of Rotary gathered at the Crown on a Tuesday in September. Loud was the clanking of chains and, shepherded in on a three-line whip to wear ties, Brigantes men were looking even smarter than usual. We welcomed our new District Governor David Phillips and his wife Joan, Assistant Governor (North) Jeremy Trigg, Knaresborough and Harrogate RC Presidents Jim Moorhouse and Mervyn Darby and, of course, our own Bill O'Rourke. It was good to see the Thackeray Suite full.

The three Presidents gave a resumé of their clubs' activities., Inevitably there was overlap. All identified membership as a major priority with Bill stressing the importance of suitable projects and Jim lauding the young 'Rotary Revolutionaries'. Other common ground involved tree planting and other environmental projects, updating websites, working with young people, linking with Harrogate District of Sanctuary, providing defibrillators and supporting Shelter Box. Knaresborough and Brigantes are both fortunate in having been left legacies and are working out how best to spend them. We can all learn from each other but it's interesting when we get together like this to see how much we have in common. It begs the question as to whether we ought to be working more closely with each other, especially where we share similar priorities.

DG David's awareness of Rotary can be traced back to the 1950s and conversations in his grandparents' kitchen. He's a shining example of someone prepared to 'have a go'. Having initially declined an invitation to join, he came on board in 1984 and has never sought high office. However when challenged to take on a role he has done so with the resulting learning curves. Twice President of the Bingley Club, he took on various responsibilities at District level, enjoyed them and finds himself now in the top job. He too stressed the need to address membership as an issue and agreed that the main need was to attract younger people. He mentioned several Rotary initiatives close to his heart including the 'Champion of Change' awards, Mercy Ships and the 'End Polio Now' campaign.

It's always reassuring to meet others in the Rotary family. It's easy to become insular and an evening such as this brings home yet again the awareness that we are part of a much larger movement which is a significant force for good in today's troubled world.



Junior Park Run Defibrillator



What a brilliant thing to be able to do!

We've purchased a portable defibrillator for the regular Junior Park Run in the Valley Gardens. There were already a couple of defibrillators set up in the Valley Gardens but they used to get vandalised so the fun run organisers asked us if we could provide them with a portable machine which they could bring to an event and take away at the end.



We presented it at the Fun Run on 1st October and there it is – the red rucksack, along with some of the 187 runners and 43 volunteer helpers.

Glad to help!

Bethany Blows Her Trumpet

Following the rousing talk by our two RYLA awardees on 26 September, the following week saw us open-mouthed in admiration of young musician Bethany Harby. She had approached the Club at the suggestion of a member of the Knaresborough Silver Band for assistance in acquiring a new trumpet and we had agreed to give her £200. The pound of flesh required was that she came and talked to us about her musical journey. And what an excellent requirement that was. Members were enchanted and humbled by Beth's effervescent confidence, her modesty, and her musical ability - she played both a trumpet and a flugel horn for us. She was eight when she picked up and began to play her first instrument – the cornet – and it was not her school but a local youth band that gave her the opportunity and nurtured her talent. Almost immediately she knew that music was what she wanted to do with her life.

Her musical skills developed rapidly, and she managed to get a place at Chetham's School in Manchester, where she is spending her "sixth-form" years. She admitted that her confidence has been boosted by the quality of teaching she is currently receiving there, and she is now applying for a place at a conservatoire to further her musical education. Those of us who were privileged to have heard her talk and play will be in no doubt that she will make a success of her life and career. Not only is she very talented but she is also sensible and grounded. While she would like a career as a soloist or orchestral player, she knows that there are other paths open to her – as a session musician, in musical education and music therapy, and she is currently open to them all.

In thanking us for supporting her she explained the large numbers of different types of trumpets that there are – a revelation to all of us – and explained what they can do and why so many are needed. At the end of her talk, and following a lively session of questions and answers, our President Bill O'Rourke thanked Beth for agreeing to talk to us and announced to her surprise that instead of a cheque for £200 he was presenting her with one for £500. The pound of flesh for that is that she keeps in touch with us so we can follow what we expect to be her rapidly developing career.



Bill with Bethany and her trumpet

Guy Wilson

THE BRIGAND

Mercy Ships

It's a well-known fact that third world countries don't have enough medical care and certainly don't have enough hospitals. It was this that, in 1978, led Don and Deyon Stephens to some lateral thinking. Why not bring the hospital to those who most need it? Hence the concept of Mercy Ships was born.

Peter Montgomery, President of Market Weighton RC spoke to us about them and he should know – he's been serving on them for 16 years. Their mission is to bring hope and healing to the world's most deprived nations. There are currently two ships and Peter's experience has been on the older of them, the Africa Mercy which was funded largely by Ann Gloag co-founder of Stagecoach and a Rotarian.



The Africa Mercy

The advantages of a hospital ship are clear. The crew and staff can bring everything they need and they usually dock for ten months. Given that 50% of the world's population live within 100 miles of a port city it means the facilities are available to many people. The need is overwhelming. 17m people die every year because they can't access health services. The problem is particularly bad in NW Africa and this is the area covered by the Africa Mercy. Since 1978 Mercy Ships have visited over 55 developing countries. Training local medics is also part of the work so that when the ship leaves, they are better equipped to deal with the health issues of the local population.

The list of specialist procedures carried out on the ships is impressive. Maxillo facial, plastic reconstruction, orthopaedic, obstetric fistula, ophthalmic, dental, palliative care – all are

catered for. Simpler operations such as cataract removal have dramatic results when people can suddenly see again.

We were introduced to pictures of a number of people all of whom had a different disfiguring condition and all of whom were shunned in their village because of it. The post-operative improvement was remarkable, as they looked forward to being given back their lives without the shame of being seen as 'different'.

Anyone can volunteer – even an 89 year-old woman from Sunderland. However you need to pay your own air fare and it costs £17.50 day to work a 12-hour shift. There are 200 different jobs on a Mercy Ship and, surprisingly, only half the crew are medical. You do have to share a cabin with five others but it's good for the team building!

What can we do? Well, as Peter pointed out we can go and volunteer, we can get involved or we can give. And if we're thinking of giving, what better international project could there be? It's got a strong Rotary connection and it gives back lives.

And, as it happens, we have money to donate.



Presidents Bill and Peter

Nicola Stamford – Big Bamboo

Look at the Big Bamboo Marketing Agency's website and you'll see how remarkable it is. Set up in 2019 and based in Harrogate, it has an international portfolio of clients, a staff of eighteen and has been named as one of the fastest-growing agencies by Prolific North. Its Founding Director is Nicola Stamford and we've been lucky enough to acquire her services to help direct our process for spending our legacy and getting a lot of much-needed publicity at the same time.

In presentations to Council and later to members Nicola outlined her strategy. She's taken our idea of making a first tranche of £25,000 available by advertising locally and asking for applications and she's identified our target audiences. She gave us a challenging schedule which would result in the winners being identified by February 2024. She stressed the importance of using social media and also of ensuring our new website is up and running as soon as possible. We also discussed the composition of a selection committee comprising Rotarians and members of the local business community.

Nicola's presentation was much appreciated. What she proposes will take us out of our comfort zone and may even make us think about how we can develop Brigantes. If the legacy enables us to do that as well as giving good causes a boost it will have been doubly welcome.



Nicola with President Bill and Peter Wood

Harrogate Homeless Project



This was the first time we had welcomed Richard Cooper shorn of his civic responsibilities. It didn't sound as if he regretted not being Council Leader. In fact it seemed he relished it – “a very easy transition”. Nor does it seem as if he's been short of things to do. On an October evening he was wearing his hat as a Trustee of the Harrogate Homeless Project.

Richard had some very clear messages for us. The first was that we should not confuse rough sleeping, begging and homelessness. We may think of Harrogate as an affluent town – which, relatively, it is – but, as we can see if we keep our eyes open, it is not without many of the problems of our cities.

The Project began in 1991, the product of a desire by local churches to address the issue of homelessness – David Hoskins was involved in its inception. It did some wonderful work but it soon became apparent that simply to give a homeless person a roof over their head did not solve the problem. Invariably they were unable to organise themselves sufficiently and were soon back on the streets. This cycle is something that Richard sees regularly.

It also ignores the fact that some people *choose* to sleep rough. For various reasons it's what they prefer. It may not mean they are homeless. The only meaningful support they can be given is to help them address the root problems they have to deal with. The Homeless Project can provide accommodation, but it can also provide specialist services which will help them to address their issues which in turn will help them to keep a roof over their heads. Last year it provided 6,000 bed nights, its hostels were always at least 95% full and it provided 4,000 meals per month.

A common problem is addiction, either because individuals themselves are addicts or because they are dealers. The 'county lines' issue is a real cause for concern. In an area like Harrogate, some affluent upper middle-class residents may use drugs recreationally. What they don't appreciate is that behind this lies a back story of young people who are enticed into taking drugs by the promise of a free supply only to find that they are soon in debt to the dealers and have to work supplying drugs to pay off their debt – which they are rarely able to do.

The Homeless project, for which Richard works as a volunteer, has several accommodation centres which provide expert support and beds. It is successful in around twelve cases per month but still the problem doesn't go away. What can we do to help? Here is Richard's second important message: Don't give money to people who beg. It will simply go to feed their own addiction or will be paid directly to the dealers. If you want to donate, give to charities – such as the Homeless Project – which can address the problem.

It was good to welcome Richard again and to appreciate a politician who actually works for the greater good.

Not Dark Yet

It was actually pretty dark when we met at Oakdale to talk about the late Peter Robinson's book but, as always, the conversation sparked.

The book is the 27th and penultimate in the DCI Banks series, some of which have been adapted for television. Several of our number had read others and reckoned this was not one of his best. Herein lay a problem. As is often the case with a series, events which have taken place in previous books are referred to without being fully explained. This can be frustrating, and it can also clog up the narrative. So, we all found the opening chapters difficult to assimilate, given the multiple characters and references. Once the substantive story got going we were much happier and indeed most of us found it a well-constructed detective yarn, a bit improbable at times (can you really drive from Doncaster to Richmond in half an hour?) but that may be par for the course. The characterisation was variable; Banks was well-drawn but others were a tad two-dimensional – femme fatale, stage villain, faux Maigret – but there were enough twists to keep you hooked as the plot drew to its conclusion.



So far so reasonably good. But there were irritations. Peter Robinson evidently wants to convince us that Banks is a music buff with decidedly catholic tastes (everything from Bach's Sonatas and Partitas – played of course by Rachel Podger – to 'Then he Kissed Me' by the Crystals). The music references become obtrusive. Whether they're an attempt to give Banks a modicum of individuality or it's just the author showing off wasn't clear. Another irritation was geographical. Banks' patch is in North Yorkshire so we encounter Leeds and York and even the smaller Green Hammerton and Adel. Why then do we have the self-conscious confectionery of Eastvale (which aficionados identified as Richmond), Fortford and Tetchly Fell? It's all slightly precious and All Creaturesish.

So I guess what we are saying is that Peter Robinson can write and the DCI Banks books can hook you. Only, dear reader, we would advise you not necessarily to start with this one.

Enough to daunt any author

Thinking about Remembrance



The talk began with Tony reminding us of the history of our Club's involvement with the Remembrance Service at the War Graves in Stonefall Cemetery. We then heard from Mike Bevington (and how lovely it was to have him with us) who told us how it all began in 1997. The link was with the Rotary Club of Wellington North, New Zealand, because many New Zealand airmen are buried here. Mike was massively instrumental in inaugurating the event and organised it for many years before Guy took over.

We then heard from Peter and Guy who shared the main part of the evening. How fortunate we are to have Guy Wilson, an internationally renowned military historian, and Peter Wood, a Cambridge scholar in English, as members of Brigantes. We were looking forward to a great evening and were not disappointed. Peter read from the Gettysburg Address, and it slowly dawned on me that he was speaking in an accent not his own. He had obviously been rehearsing his American twang. Guy said that remembering was to help prevent war, but it has not worked, has it? Perhaps we need a different kind of remembering.

We heard poetry and readings that were by turns moving and pertinent. Very powerful was the story about Vera Brittain sitting looking at a portrait of her brother after his death in WW1. She said, "The sad eyes of the portrait were more than I could bear." We should, said Guy, "remember without prejudice" and there are many ways of remembering. He ended with a piece of brilliant research about the crew of a Lancaster bomber which crashed "a little before midnight on the evening of December 16th 1943." Five of those who died were Canadians. This was a deeply moving account of their last flight. "The pity of war" was a phrase he used several times.

Peter used his accent skills again when he sang in what I think was a Cockney accent, and with great verve and enthusiasm, 'When This Bloody War is Over'. Finally, and very appropriately, he read four verses from 'For The Fallen' by Laurence Binyon, the last of which is well known:

*They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*



The Cast of the Show

David Hoskins.

Rotakids



Pat Taylor with President Bill

We think Rotarians are getting older. But here's the thing: they're getting younger.

Pat Taylor is the District 1040 Youth Lead so she goes into primary schools every week and oversees their Rotary Clubs – aka Rotakids. Once they're trained they elect their own officials, run their own meetings and decide which charities to support. This is no small operation. She currently has 49 schools on her books.

The benefits are clear to Pat. The children grow in confidence as they run their own affairs. They develop an awareness of how they can help others. They meet at lunchtime and they can start young – some members are in Year2.

There's a similar arrangement for secondary students – Interact. By this age it's official; they pay subs just as if they were in a Rotary Club. But the principles are the same. They elect their own President, Secretary and Treasurer. The would-be Presidents have to make a presentation to their electorate. Pat made clear that Interact is a bit more complicated. Being official there are lots of

forms to fill in and there's a proper constitution

We already work with primary and secondary schools so if we wanted to extend our operation Rotakids and Interact would seem good places to start.

We also welcomed two couples who actually met at school via the more commonly known Rotaract. David and Jane Allison and Steve and Cheryl Day brought along some photos of themselves at school with Rotaract friends and spoke enthusiastically about the good causes they had been able to support.

L-R Dave and Jane Allison, Cheryl and Steve Day with President Bill



THE BRIGAND

Remembrance Service

On 16th December 1943 one of many Lancaster bombers was returning from a raid on Berlin. To avoid night fighters they took a less direct route home over Denmark. DS 837 had a crew of seven, six Canadians and one Englishman. As the plane approached East Moor airfield at Sutton-on-the-Forest its altimeter wasn't working properly and they were lower than they thought. As they passed over the village of Yearsly in the Howardian Hills, a wing clipped a haystack and the plane veered straight across the main street, taking off roofs of farm buildings before crashing into a tree. There was only one survivor.

David Hoskins told the story, which had been researched by Guy Wilson. And this is where the unique experience of the Remembrance Service at Stonefall is immediately evident for the six who died were with us, buried together behind where David spoke, the site marked by a Canadian flag.

There are Remembrance Services up and down the country but not all have this immediacy. It was enhanced by the music of the Harrogate Band, by the laying of a red carnation on every grave by students from Ashville College and junior soldiers from the Army Foundation College, by the laying of 23 wreaths from the community and armed services and by the solemnity of the two-minute silence following the Last Post. One of the wreaths was laid by Mike Bevington who had been instrumental in initiating the ceremony in 1997.

As ever it was a moving service, giving us time to contemplate not only the sacrifices of those around us and beyond but a world torn apart by wars in so many places even now.

Thanks are due to Guy, David and all who made possible this moving tribute.



Murderers I Have Known

David Hoskins confessed all. Yes, he had known three but there was a catch with the first one. A lady admitted to him that she'd buried two members of her family in the garden. "You do realise I'll have to tell the police," responded David but she didn't seem unduly concerned. So the officers arrived with their white overalls, put up their tent and began digging where there were two fresh mounds of earth. Whereupon they duly discovered the bodies – of two Alsatians.

Much more serious was the case of Mark Hobson from Wakefield who in 2002, under the influence of alcohol and drugs, stabbed his friend five times. Undeterred by his Community Service Order, two years later he abused his girlfriend Claire then went out with a shopping list for knives, bin bags and bleach and murdered her with 17 blows to the head. Claire had a twin sister with whom he was obsessed and he then murdered her. The bodies were eventually discovered hidden in his flat. Hobson fled to Strensall where he killed a man and his wife. Eventually, having lived rough for some time, he was arrested. The police decided he needed medical attention and he was admitted to Harrogate District Hospital which was where David met him. He found him quite pleasant and intelligent. His only request was for a Mars Bar. He was eventually committed to Wakefield prison and had the distinction of being the first person to be given a whole-life tariff. David visited him three more times, only stopping when Mark Hobson managed to pour boiling water over a fellow prisoner.



David in full flow

The third murderer was much more sinister. David Davis presented as a debonair member of the congregation at Harrogate Baptist Church, claiming to be a financial adviser and collector of paintings. He said he was American and had recently retired having sold a bank. It was all lies. He was actually Albert Walker, a Canadian and as he paraded his financial knowledge around David's congregation many were taken in, including, by his own admission, David himself. But Maureen Mountford wasn't taken in. She found him "evasive" and "a phoney" and, once he found himself challenged, he disappeared.

David had the unique experience of quoting from a book, 'The Hand in the Water' by Bill Schiller which actually referred to him. He had never met the author but words were freely put into his mouth. Turns out Davis was being hunted by Canadian police and his time in Harrogate was simply an attempt to create a respectable persona. He then went into business with a Ron Platt and persuaded Platt to emigrate whereupon he took Platt's identity. But Platt returned so Davis invited him to go sailing with him and murdered him, dumping his body overboard. But, as luck would have it, a trawler accidentally fished up the body which was identified via a watch (hence the book's title). Davis was finally arrested (his crimes included an incestuous relationship with his daughter) and was sentenced to 30 years in jail, being released only this year.

David left us with the tantalising information that one and possibly two TV programmes about the whole saga could hit our screens next year, propelling David to international stardom. Watch this space!

Thanks to David for a talk with a difference.

SGM and Quiz Night

On 20 November Brigantes held its SGM. The mood was subdued as it was announced that no nominations for officers had been received and that, therefore, the existing officers would continue for another year while strenuous efforts were made to find new active members who could take the Club forward.

The mood then brightened as Tony Doveston introduced his fiendish Yorkshire quiz. For the rest of the evening four teams battled for supremacy – Wilson's Wizards, Chilvers' Charmers, Butterworth's Boffins and Bainbridge's Brain Boxes. After some difficult judgements on fairness from our quizmaster the result was announced to be a dead heat between the Boffins and the Brain Boxes who shared the chocolatey prizes between them as the rest of us limped hungrily home wishing we hadn't mixed up Middleham and Helmsley Castles and could have remembered the name of the first female Doctor Who – etc, etc. Because then we could have won the goodies!

Guy Wilson



York City Walls

Amid a welter of rain we hit on an island of sunshine. Just one fine day and we'd chosen it for our (becoming traditional) December city walk. Last year Ripon, this year York. And what's more we had a goodly group – eight of us – and Guy on hand to lead us unerringly on the 2¾ mile circuit complete with walls map and York timeline. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, actually nothing except that the second half of the walk, a pleasant amble by the river to the Park and Ride didn't happen – couldn't happen unless we'd brought our snorkelling gear. Judging by the state of all rivers seen (Nidd, Foss, Ouse) a riverside path was a contradiction in terms. Such were the recent deluges that rivers had burst their banks and were lakes. In York parkland by the river could only be distinguished by the tops of seats and litter bins poking through and all riverside buildings had water well up their walls.



But the good news – there was plenty of that for the sky was blue, the air crisp and the views magnificent. We started at Bootham Bar and set off anticlockwise, saving the best bit alongside the Minster until the end. But in truth it was all spectacular and there were information panels at intervals telling us where we were and the history of that place. It's remarkable that the walls have endured and survived the best efforts of 19thC local politicians to dismember them. They're narrow in places and you have to watch your feet where there are no railings. There are lots of steps as you cross roads and ascend to the next stage but it's a unique experience and a good way to get an unusual view of the city and work up an appetite.

Cue the day's second miracle. Pre-Christmas York was busy and it was agreed a lunch venue for eight might be tricky to find. But no. Our first attempt met with instant success as the Fat Badger next to Bootham Bar came up with two tables in a snug outside room with loads of space and a tempting menu which provided a leisurely lunch.

Having determined to return by land rather than water, we were soon swaying back on a crammed Park and Ride bus as the sun began to dip and the air to chill. Thanks Guy for a memorable day

The Nidd and Pollution

There's been a lot in the local media recently about the state of the river Nidd and that was what Stephen Culpin came to talk to us about. He's been working for our MP Andrew Jones and is off to take up a new appointment in London soon. In the meantime they have been working together on trying to improve the state of the Nidd.

The problem is one being repeated around the country. Much of the sewage network is Victorian and is increasingly incapable of serving a much larger population. Additionally we are seeing an increase in the number of serious weather events which lead to a greater risk of flooding via run-off and storm drains. The two together mean that increasing amounts of raw sewage are being deposited in our rivers amid a clamour for the water companies to do something about it.

The state of the Nidd was causing such concern that various stakeholders including local MPs, Yorkshire Water, Nidderdale AONB and Harrogate Fly Fishers met to create a plan of action. Their focus became a campaign to create bathing water status for the river with particular reference to the popular lido at Knaresborough.

To achieve it they had to collect masses of information for DEFRA about how many swim there, what local support can be guaranteed from the Council, farmers and the community and what further investment can be made to the infrastructure. The document took over a year to compile and was handed over on 23rd October with masses of evidence and photos.

Steven and Andrew are confident the river will get the coveted bathing status which will lead to the necessary improvements. The next question will be whether Yorkshire Water will make good on its promises to invest in cleaning the river and that for that apparently we will have to wait until 2035

In the meantime, anyone for a dip?



Stephen with Ruth and President Bill

THE BRIGAND

Les Jacques

I lost count of how many times Les had retired. It could have been three or even four. It was always from ICI and he was always called back the next day and always in a different role. His early career seemed fairly conventional, taking in Pontypool, Oadby and Gloucester as well as Harrogate where he's Kelvin's neighbour. He always seemed to be looking ahead, searching for the next innovation in fibres and polyesters. He gave two graphic examples. Bras, which had formerly comprised 14 parts (don't ask) became a single moulded item. Denim which had formerly been just plain denim was transformed into a plethora of fashionable varieties.

But it was in his final manifestation that Les found his *métier*. When asked to come up with the three major potential business de-railers he identified Eco, Eco and Eco. He began to immerse himself in the world of environmental considerations and sustainability and, as his talk and his response to questions demonstrated, he has made himself (though he would deny it) something of an expert.

Take water. We don't appreciate its scarcity or how we should conserve it. Only 3.5% of the earth's water is fresh and 3% is locked away in ice, leaving only 0.5% available for all humans and animals. He gave us horror tales of major lakes such as the Aral Sea drying up and water levels in the Rhine being lowered because too much water is being taken out for industrial processes.

Or microplastics. 12 million tons of the stuff is added to our oceans every year and it has a devastating effect on wildlife and ultimately on us all. Textiles have a significant role in this. Whether brushing them, washing them or putting them through a spin dryer, they contribute ½ a million tons of microplastics a year. And it isn't just the man-made fibres that are the problem; cotton actually sheds more fibres than polyester.

Addressing the problem is fraught with difficulty. The two best alternatives are built-in biodegradability or recycling. It isn't yet clear to what extent the first is possible. The second can be done but it's expensive and raises the issue of who should pay. Diapers are a good example. How do you get rid of 70 billion every year? Can you incinerate? Can you recycle? Hundreds of millions of pounds are being spent on research. Les is looking at the possibility of composting but, despite contacting would-be composters from around the world, he can't find any willing to take them.

Les' message wasn't unduly optimistic and yet there's no doubt that the world and especially its political leaders are more aware of environmental issues now than they were when he took up the cudgels. If we are to address the problem it's because Les and countless people like him around the world are making it their business to make us aware of it. He clearly enjoys what he does; it is to his credit that we can all benefit from it.



Les with President Bill and Kelvin

The Christmas Cabin

The weather could have been better but then it could also have been a lot worse. The cabin was certainly preferable to standing on a market stall in the open at this time of year. There were plenty of people about and a good atmosphere. It got our name out there and several people asked about Rotary, our club and what we were about. One or two even took a leaflet.

A big thank you to all who donated prizes. The biggest thank you goes to Jean also to Tim and Ruth, not Rotarians but Rotary Angels. The duck looked amazing and the wrapped prizes were much appreciated by the recipients and very festive.

Bill left the dog and put in a full day. Many thanks to Ruth and Moya for the extended lunch break and to David and Sue Cresswell for help with the setting up. It was good fun on the day. Our duck pluckers enjoyed themselves even when they didn't win and one lady even left £5 – and didn't take a single feather.

Total takings in the cash box were £231.30 with another £20 on the card reader

Diane Stokes.



The Duck in all its glory

THE BRIGAND

Instruments for Nepal

Cast your mind back to 2019, pre-Covid and all that. Kids Aloud staged 'Monkey Boy', based on a Nepali folk tale and we welcomed 40 children from Nepal who, together with local primary school pupils, put on the show at the Royal Hall. Our own Guy Wilson was the Creative Director, Sumit Pokhrel directed the Nepalis and composer Shri Sriram helped the children write the songs.

They all had the idea that they would like to leave a more lasting legacy. They decided they would like to provide musical instruments for a charity, Music Art Society, which teaches disadvantaged children to play music and is run by Pokhrel. Shri, who occasionally plays at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in Soho, approached the Ronnie Scott Foundation which organises annual instrument 'amnesties' and passes on donated instruments to worthy causes at home and abroad. They agreed to donate a variety of instruments which were driven back from London by Guy and Andy Morrison in a van donated for the purpose by Kaydee Engineering Plastics of Shipley.

There were 25 instruments including violins, flutes, recorders, trumpets, a piccolo, guitars, a ukelele, a set of bongo drums and a penny whistle. Star of the show was a white signed violin which had belonged to pop star Sam Smith and was signed by him.

But how to get them to Nepal? Covid intervened and they were stored at Guy's house. Even after the pandemic problems remained. As Guy explained, there were difficulties getting a shipper. "No shipper would touch it. They had all been stung before by charities not paying for the duty when it was charged on arrival." So step in Rotary. Guy found a willing shipper, Brigantes allocated £2,000 for the transport and our Nepali friend Major Lil agreed to pay anything additionally required and invoice us.

So all's well. The instruments will soon be on their way and some lucky Nepali pupil will be playing Sam Smith's violin. It just shows how, thanks to Guy, Shri, Pokhrel, Andy, Lil and Ronnie Scott, Rotary has been able to transform young lives on the other side of the world.



Guy packs one of the trumpets

St Peter's Café

The December café proved a popular venue for Christmas Fair shoppers, so much so that by lunchtime Moya had to do a mercy dash to Sainsbury's for more provisions. By 2.00pm those were exhausted, as were the Brigantes volunteers so they shut up shop in triumph at 2.15. Those four hours yielded a total of £645.96 which, after deducting £85.00 for the hire of the venue, left us with a clear profit of £560.96 which will go into the Charity Account earmarked for local charities we support.

Particular thanks are due to Moya for organising and running the café, to Diane for all her baking and her work on the day, to Liz Burkinshaw for a lovely fruit cake, to Bill who did a full-day stint in the kitchen, to ace table-clearers and cashiers Peter, Les, Graham, Ruth, Keith and John Butterworth, to David and Sue Cresswell who joined the kitchen staff and to Tim Grainger who operated the dishwasher all day.

Truly a team effort!



The kitchen team stand ready: Bill, Moya, Diane and Tim

A college student challenged a senior citizen, saying it was impossible for their generation to understand his.

"You grew up in a different world," the student said.

"Today we have television, jet planes, space travel, nuclear energy, computers..." Taking advantage of a pause in the student's litany, the geezer said, "You're right. We didn't have those things when we were young; so we invented them! What are you doing for the next generation??"

Q: What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?

**A: Pumpkin π
Sorry. I'll see myself out.**

Since Youngsters of Today have their Texting Codes (LOL, OMG, TTYL, LMAO, etc.) the Oldies decided not to be outdone by these kids and now have developed our own codes too :

- ◆ ATD - At the Doctor's*
- ◆ BFF - Best Friend's Funeral
- ◆ BTW - Bring the Wheelchair
- ◆ BYOT - Bring your own teeth
- ◆ FWIW - Forgot Where I Was
- ◆ GGPBL - Gotta Go, Pacemaker Battery Low*
- ◆ GHA - Got Heartburn Again
- ◆ TFT - Texting From Toilet.

"All I ask is the chance to prove that money can't make me happy."

Spike Milligan

The man that invented the Ferris wheel never met the man that invented the merry go round. They traveled in different circles.

Pessimists see the glass half empty

Optimists are already opening another bottle



You're 96 and still don't need glasses?

No dear, I drink straight from the bottle.

