

LOOKS EAST

The Newsletter of The Rotary Club of Ipswich East
Edition 19-2020 : 18th August 2020

CLUB OFFICERS—2020/21

President: David Chittick

Sen V. President: Jo Banthorpe

Jun V. President: Steve Runnacles

Secretary: Tony Baker

Asst Secretary: Martin Westlake

Treasurer: Neil Hewitt



August
Neil Hewitt
Toby Pound
George Woodward
September
John Button
Geoff Watson
Roger Gilles
Russell Wiles
Richard Porter
Mark Harrison
Chris Banham
Clifford Smith

Club Zoom Meeting Tuesday 18th August starting at 6.30pm

Member Juliette Adams will share her childhood memory about our friendship with a Chinese family who fled the People's Republic of China.

Duty Rotarians:
Vote of Thanks, David Chittick & Note Taker, Eric Barnett

Details of Club Meeting via Zoom

Catherine Forsdike is the Zoom host and will open the 'room' at 6.15pm so the early-birds can freely chat and admire members' virtual backgrounds.

Please don't wait until 6.30pm to try to get into the room.

At 6.30pm a bell will ring so that President David can call us to order and give the customary announcements.

It's important that we can still talk in small groups as we would round a table for a meal so we will be divided into 'breakout rooms' for around 10minutes.

During the meeting please use the 'chat' facility to put your questions.

**The meeting will end with the final toast
'Rotary and Peace the World Over' at 7.30pm**

We have arranged for the 'room' to remain open for more informal talking until 7.45pm just as we would after a physical meeting.

The link to access the meeting was sent in an email from Tony Baker on Sunday evening and the covering email to this newsletter.

If you can't find it, it's the same as the one for the previous meeting.

Tony Baker continues his fascinating series of fire fighter memories.

[This is quite a gripping tale - I had to read it twice! Ed.]

The Tar Baby

The bells went down at 2am. It was in the middle of a night shift at Chatham Fire Station in 1966. I was 18 and a newly qualified fireman. Night shifts were 15 hours long. We had worked on the station from 6pm to midnight and then we were permitted to rest fully clothed on camp beds until 6.30am. It had to be fully clothed as only sixty seconds were allowed for the fire engine to be on the road and mobile to an incident from when the bells first rang out.

Calls in the middle of the night were always a shock to the system. Fire bells suddenly belted out throughout the station breaking the stillness of the night. All domestic and emergency lights flashed on. It had become automatic, jump up, run, slide down the pole shaft, run, up into the cab and pull on the fire gear, listen for where we were going and the type of incident.

The sub officer climbed into the cab. Chatham Dockyard, Pembroke Gate, Number 2 Basin, Destroyer. Flash revved the engine, the engine house doors sprang open and we were away into the night and along to Chatham Hill. The brigade radio sparked up. "Fire below decks, Persons Reported", people were unaccounted for.

The Sub Officer consulted the Major Risk Register. Parking alongside and good fire hydrants along the quay. He turned around, "Rig in BA." The Tar Baby and I had been detailed to wear breathing apparatus at the 6pm parade. I pulled on the oxygen set, did up the body straps and then sat like a tightly packed sardine in a line of four in the back of the cab. The oxygen cylinder was digging into the small of my back and the breathing bag lay on my chest. The ancient oxygen set did not have a face mask but instead had a mouthpiece, nose clip and goggles. However, it did have the advantage that it would last for a good hour. We sped through quiet streets. I was apprehensive. The Tar Baby sat impassively. He was built like a bull and named after an American boxer sometimes called the Boston Bone Crusher. He winked calmly, I felt reassured.

We entered the dockyard and followed an escort van around the bends on the wet cobbled roadway through rows of dark dockyard buildings, and then, there it was, a great grey hulking structure against the night sky. It was lit by an assortment of lights with men scurrying across the decks and a column of grey smoke rising and spreading out on the after deck. The Sub Officer ran up the gangway and I waited at the bottom with the Tar Baby. The rest of our crews connected hose from the fire hydrant to the pump to secure our water supply and then laid out great bights of smaller diameter hose ready for us to move forward. The smaller diameter hose would be comparatively more manoeuvrable in the tight confines of the ship. I looked up. The ship was throbbing with life and activity. It was enormous, "Brace up lad, just another job, just a quick squirt."

The Sub Officer came running back and said that the fire was in one of the messes. "Start up." Oxygen valves were turned on, mouthpieces were gripped between teeth, goggles were pulled down, nose clip clipped on, straps secured, and up the gangway we went pulling the hose behind us. We stood near the hatchway where the smoke was escaping. A naval fire crew emerged from the smoke wearing compressed air breathing apparatus and asbestos fire suits. They reported to a young naval officer. The crew look exhausted. The leader yanked off his face mask. He leaned forward putting his hands on his knees. There was a deep line where the face mask had bit into his hot face. He breathed deeply and words came in short bursts. "Bloody hot, can't touch the metalwork, thick smoke, can't see anything, dragged the hose as far as we could sir, low on air, didn't reach the fire."

The naval officer said well done and told them to report to the Master at Arms. There was a naval rating alongside the officer also dressed in an asbestos fire suit and breathing apparatus. The officer told the rating to guide us down to the lower mess decks. The rating's eyes widened and he looked from the officer towards the smoke. The naval officer repeated the order. "No" said the rating curtly but quietly. He was staring with a fixed gaze at the smoke coming from the hatchway. The naval officer moved his position to stand directly in front of the rating.



The direct order was repeated. The rating looked towards the officer then back towards the smoke. There was a movement and then a fist moved up in a swing that caught the officer high on the side of the head which knocked his cap flying. Hands grasped the rating and he was frog marched away. A Petty Officer picked up the officer's cap and handed it to him. He put the cap back on and regained his composure. "Pretty straight forward route for your chaps. In through the hatch, along the passageway and through the water tight door. Hatch to the left, go through and then down the ladder. Follow our hose." He turned and strode stiffly away.

Our Sub Officer raised his eyes and looked at the Tar Baby. "Stay tight!" The hose was charged with water and we moved forward. Fire crews at the hatchway fed and pushed the hose in to aid our progress. Usual practise was to keep the pressure low until the jet was opened so that the hose was not so rigid that it would impeded our progress. Flash would be carefully watching his pump gauges in readiness to increase the water pressure and flow of water when we started to fight the fire.

Oxygen breathing apparatus was a comfortable set to wear. A small cylinder of oxygen across the small of the back, harness across the shoulders to carry the weight and a breathing bag at the front where carbon dioxide was stripped out before the oxygen was recycled around the set again and again. The big problem was no mask, just a mouthpiece, nose clip and goggles. Communication was difficult and you had to rely on hand signals. In thick smoke you maintained very close contact. It was easy to get separated. Tar Baby led. I followed, closely. It was smoky but with some visibility towards the ground. I could see the naval hose on the deck. Our hose was being pushed in by crews outside so we made good progress. It was getting smokier and warmer.

Tar Baby found the water tight door, he grabbed my arm so that I should feel the opening. We stepped through and followed the naval hose. The hose went off to the left through a hatch. The smoke was thicker and I could just see the glimmer of the ship's lights. Tar Baby adopted the breathing apparatus shuffle to move forwards of sideways stance and using the front leg to feel for obstructions and voids. The front hand moved up and down and side to side to feel for obstructions and hazards. The back of the hand always faced forwards so that in the event that you contacted anything hot, electrical or sharp, the natural reaction was for the hand to close, recoil and come back to you. That ensured that you did not grab the hazard. Progress was slow in the thick smoke. I kept tight and kept pulling the hose.

Tar Baby found the hatch and then a bit further on where the hose disappeared down the raking ladder. He grunted through his mouthpiece that I should pull in large bights of hose. I pulled in about thirty feet. I pushed a loop of hose beyond the hatch. Heat and thick smoke were rising from the ladder. We moved down the raking ladder. The metal work was hot. We shuffled forward again. The smoke was thicker and closely enveloped us. I kept in contact by touch. We came to the end of the hose line laid by the naval crew. Tar Baby stopped and turned. "Gauges!" We turned to face each other, kneeled and used torches to check each other's gauge to see how much oxygen remained in our cylinders. "OK?" "OK" We moved forward again. Ears were hot and tingling. We came to an open hatchway. Inside there was a clouded and muffled dark and dirty red glow. "More hose" I pulled. Nothing, no movement. It had become very hot and I kept as low as possible. I crawled back into the passageway and pulled again. The hose moved and I pulled in a bight. A second breathing apparatus crew must have entered the ship and had been pulling the hose around the corners. I crawled back and Tar Baby pushed me in front of him and said to give it a squirt. I could feel him closely behind me.

In a kneeling position, I opened the jet to give the fire a blast. I could feel the hose, which was tucked under my arm, stiffen as Flash increased the water pressure. A cloud of hissing steam and smoke came back at us. We lowered our heads and helmets for protection. We continued to hit the seat of the fire until less steam and smoke came towards us. "Squirt the room." I changed the jet to a spray and sprayed around the mess. "Gauges." We checked our cylinder contents. More than half of the oxygen had been used and we needed enough oxygen to be able to get out. The second breathing apparatus crew joined us. They signalled that we should leave and that they would continue to fight the fire. We carefully followed our hose back to the raking ladder and along the passageways then out into fresh air to report to the Sub Officer.

Removing the mouth piece after a hot fire was always a messy job. The Tar Baby was so hot that he was steaming in the cold night air. He offered me a Refresher. He always carried Refreshers in his fire tunic. "Well done lad." All the naval personnel had evacuated from below decks and all were later accounted for. The fire had been contained and extinguished. It had been a hot and smoky fire but the Tar Baby had done it many times before. He knew what to do and how to do it. John Gardiner was an immense but quiet fireman's fireman. He had served in the forces during the war and he never showed any doubt at emergencies. I learned a lot from him.

Future Meetings:

- Tuesday 1st Sept Guest Speaker: Alan Green Principal Copleston school talking about "Copleston School during the Pandemic."
Duty Rotarians: Graham Bickers (VoT), Michelle Bevan-Margetts (notes)
- Tuesday 15th Sept Guest Speaker: Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Michael Strand, Community Fundraising Manager. He will tell us what we can do in our gardens and community to make them more wildlife friendly.
Duty Rotarians: John Button (VoT), John Clements (notes)
- Tuesday 29th Sept Guest Speaker: TBA
Duty Rotarians: Stuart Cooper (VoT), Des Cunningham (notes)
- Speaker Finder Steve Jones would love to hear from you with ideas for future speakers.

'All For One and..'

We need more solidarity in the Rotary Club of Bröckedde", said President Pröpke and asked the club's intellectual Dr. Krümelein to make a motivational speech. He was very happy to do this, and used as its title, "One for all, all for one" from the novel "The Three Musketeers" by Alexandre Dumas.



Dr. Krümelein also quoted the unofficial motto of the Swiss Confederation "Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno", which can be found as an inscription high up in the domed building of the Federal Parliament in Bern. The speaker nodded sagely and was met with loud applause. A praiseworthy feeling of solidarity wafted through the Salon Hindenburg.

"We'll see how long this lasts," grumbled Treasurer Knödler. He belonged to the hard core of the Club and was one of the few who kept everything going. Alongside President Pröpke, Treasurer Knödler and Dr. Krümelein, Friends Bommerzahn and Polterblume could also be relied on to help out. For some of the other 60 members, the Rotarian commitment was encompassed in the motto "Meet, greet, eat". This did not stop the MGE faction from being somewhat critical of the comparison with Musketeers - adding "Meet, greet, eat and grumble".

Treasurer Knödler's had a point in his scepticism. Few had wanted to accept an invitation from the French partner club St. Maladie sur Mer, with the exception of the five musketeers. In order to make the Bröckedde delegation look halfway presentable, President Pröpke had brought along his Aunt Klothilde and two nephews.

During the charity BBQ for St. Eulalia children's home, Friend Bommerzahn had stood alone behind the grill for eight hours before having to give up due to smoke inhalation. Friend Polterblume pulled a muscle whilst putting up the Rotarian benefit concert posters featuring the Bröckedder Philharmonic Orchestra.

When Treasurer Knödler took in three exchange students all at once because nobody else had space and time, the dam burst as he announced to President Pröpke: "I am now appointing a master painter." "For what?" they asked. "For a new club motto" - and members saw the results at the next meeting in the Salon Hindenburg. "Few for all and always the same" written in blood-red letters on the ceiling!

Bröckedde is located in the heart of Germany - where the Rhine and Danube flow into the beautiful Bröckeddesee. This is where RC Bröckedde meets in the Bröckedder Hof - every Wednesday at 1 pm in the Salon Hindenburg. [Alexander Hoffmann 01.08.2020 and submitted by Tony Baker.]

Photographic Memories of a Club BBQ

Club Photographer Richard Porter has been dipping into the archives again and shares these lovely photographs of the 2008 President's BBQ at Waldringfield.

(Thank you for jogging my memory Richard that was the year Ross and I took to the waters with our daughters!)





Janet Dillaway met with Ipswich MP Tom Hunt recently to talk about Suffolk Family Carers. We hope Janet may submit a report on the outcome for this newsletter.



Liz Harsant contributed this photo of the track suits our Club sponsored for 'Patrick's Boxing Club'.



This space is for YOU!

What could you submit for the newsletter?

If you have not been at work during this last 5 months, what have you been doing?

Have you begun a new skill or revisited an old one?

I've spent 3 months reorganising and replanning/redecorating our bedroom and dressing room.

I could bore you with photographs but I'd rather receive some illustrated stories hear from YOU.