

# LOOKS EAST

The Newsletter of The Rotary Club of Ipswich East  
Edition 26-2020 : 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Club Zoom Meeting**  
**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November starting at 6.30pm**

**‘The Future is Automated’**  
**guest speaker Chris Buxton**

*Duty Rotarians: Janet Dillaway (Vote of Thanks)  
and Ewan Dodds (notes)*

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



*November*  
Eric Barnett

*December*  
Ross Lunney  
david Chittick  
John Riches  
Juliette Adams  
Peter Leveridge

## Well done Ipswich East!

The Club Survey was sent to all members and a massive 85% replied.  
**THANK YOU.**

85% means that 60 people gave up between 3 and 10 minutes to answer 10 short questions on how the club runs during the pandemic.

The results of the survey are being analysed and discussed by the working party. They will be presenting their findings and recommendations to Club Council soon. The outcome will be published in this newsletter.

**The survey has given a very clear steer on virtual meetings and attitudes to Fund Raising, Fellowship and Community Projects.**

For example, 88% of respondents said they wanted to continue to meet fortnightly on Zoom. Eight people said they had stopped joining zoom meetings but helpfully gave some good reasons and suggestions of what would encourage them to attend. This information will inform how virtual gatherings might change as we continue out of Winter and into the Spring.



*Speaking as Newsletter Editor, I was heartened that 81% of those who replied said they value (and read) this newsletter. Slightly worrying was that 2 people said they do not receive the newsletter and 2 said they don't read it - they could be the same people (if you don't get it, you can't read it!) One of them identified themselves. The other didn't - help!*

*Continuing his series of reminiscences, Tony Baker explains how tackling a fire in a high-rise buildings has changed.*

## **The Walls Are Burning**

I had the good fortune to secure a position as a supervisory fire officer in central Birmingham in the mid-1970s. I have very happy memories of flying around the streets of Birmingham with one hand on the steering wheel of a fire car and the other hand clutching a copy of the A to Z of Birmingham Streets. The duty system was 84 hours each week, working 72 continuous hours on duty followed by 3 days off. Normal office hours were followed by a station inspection in the evening followed by being on call at home during the night.

There were always at least two large working jobs in Birmingham each night.

Liz says that during one particularly busy night when the telephone rang yet again I got out of bed and picked up the phone. I carried it out from the bedroom as far out onto the landing as the lead would allow, then put it down, returned to the bedroom, closed the door and got back into bed. I had no recollection of my actions in the morning! No matter how busy the night, I still had to appear at 8.30am in the office in central Birmingham for the Divisional Commander's "morning prayers".

### *Many calls were to high-rise flats.*

As a young fire officer I was taught to regard a high-rise block of flats as a stack of boxes, a stack of boxed compartments that stood horizontally and were laid vertically. Each flat was a compartment, each floor was a compartment, as were the vertical shafts that housed the lifts and staircases. Each compartment was constructed to contain a fire for a period of at least one hour. Thus the tried and tested plan was conceived that residents of high-rise flats should remain in their flats during a fire fighting operation which would not last for more than one hour. As with any plan, complications enter the equation when people become involved.

An empty flat without people or possessions presents very little challenge in the event of fire. As soon as people occupy the flat and bring in their possessions and begin to make alterations, the picture changes. Concrete slabs at floor and ceiling levels prevented the vertical spread of fire. Walls and entrance doors were constructed to withstand the horizontal spread of fire for one hour. Two-door fire lobbies on staircases became a design feature to prevent the spread of smoke. Most importantly, the external walls of high-rise buildings were non-combustible. Fire-fighters had an hour from time of ignition in which to fight and extinguish a fire.

On arrival at a high rise building, there were two imperatives. Secure the water supply and secure the lift. Some blocks had a wet-riser which supplied pressurised water from the town's mains direct to outlets on each floor. Others had dry-risers which had to be charged with water from a fire engine pump kept supplied from a fire hydrant. A Fireman's Switch high on the wall in the lift lobby gave us control of the lift. A fireman was charged to guard the lift with his life so that fire fighters and their equipment could be sent up to the fire. A fireman who had laboured up many flights of stairs with heavy equipment and was breathing heavily was of no use to me in a hot and smoky fire.

Mass evacuation of many people, including the elderly, infirm and children, down twenty plus flights of stairs was a non-starter. Therefore, no general fire alarm, no evacuation, no panic and a simple plan that worked because the fire was confined for an hour within a compartment.



### ***Fire-fighting changed during the sixties.***

The era of the “smoke-eater fireman” was killed off. So many natural products used in domestic furniture and fittings were replaced by synthetic materials, mostly plastics which produced black, toxic, choking smoke that could kill very quickly. The intensity of fire increased. The fire loading increased. In simple terms, fire loading measures the potential severity of a fire in a given space. It describes the amount of combustible material in a confined space and the amount of burning that can be generated. However, the fire-fighting plan for high-rise buildings was still valid and still worked. Ferocious fires in high-rise flats stripped plaster from walls and ceilings and decimated the contents of flats. Outside walls were blackened and the windows of the flat above could be crazed by heat. On our customary inspection of the building after the fire, heat could be felt in the walls, floors and ceilings of adjoining flats. Glass in the window of the flat above the fire may have cracked but fire rarely entered that flat. The fire did not spread out of the compartment. The plan stood the test of time. Compartmentation contained the fire for the duration of the fire-fighting operation, and alarms and evacuations were not necessary.

### ***The plan was systematic.***

Use the lift to travel to the floor below the fire. Walk up the stairs to the next floor and assess the situation. If that lobby was unaffected, set up a bridgehead, connect fire hoses to the riser, lay out great bights of hose, charge the hose, start up the breathing apparatus and move forward. It was good practice to minimise the number of doors that would be left ajar. Each time a fire-fighting hose passed through a fire door, the door would be left ajar and that gap would allow the ingress of air and the escape of smoke. The more air available to a fire allows more oxygen to feed the fire and thereby increase the hazard.

Now comes the danger element; that of opening the external door of the flat. Was the fire going to suck, or suck and blow, or blow or blast? It depended greatly on the amount of oxygen that was available to the fire. The canny fireman attached a strop to the door handle of the flat so that in case of real danger, the door could be pulled too or closed again.

If the windows were intact and the fire had been starved of oxygen, the fire would be subdued and smouldering. The opening of the door would offer oxygen to the fire and there could be an inrush of air. Under the right conditions of ample fuel and high temperature, the inrush of air could precipitate a flash-over with a fire ball engulfing the flat and pouring out of the door at high level. If the windows had blown then a plume of flame could roll out of the door at high level. In high wind conditions with the wind hitting the window directly on, a ball of flame like a jet engine could be driven out of the door. In all scenarios, keep low, use the landing walls for protection, fire helmet towards the door and fire, arms in, control the door, be alert, be aware and hit the fire hard with a water spray jet as quickly as possible to knock and drive the fire back. Make sure that the fire did not break out again behind you as you moved forward and cut off your line of retreat. It was hot work with an element of danger for which the firemen had been trained and were prepared for.

### ***Each time firemen went on duty they drilled.***

They routinely practised the procedures to be used on the fire-ground. Over many years, experience was accumulated within the body of the watch. In most cases, watches were led by experienced officers who could prioritise and knew what to do. I always thought that the greatest asset that the fire service had at that time was the camaraderie in the watches. Each watch aspired to be the best watch on the station and each watch was fiercely protective of the members of their watch.

The fire service used to visit tower blocks on a regular basis to inspect, to plan, to train and to test. We reported defects, ensured that equipment was in place and was operable. Then the country entered into a world of self-regulation. The concept of compartmentation was compromised. Fires started to occur in high-rise blocks that spread beyond the initial compartment and killed people beyond that initial compartment.

Investigation showed that fire stopping had been compromised. Holes had been knocked between compartments and had not been sealed adequately to maintain the integrity of the compartments. Fire safety inspections had not been carried out. Fire doors had been altered and self-closing devices on doors remained defective.

## **Dubai Hotel Fire**

For me, the most serious change that I saw was on television one evening when a fire occurred in 2016 in a Dubai hotel (pictured). I could not believe what I was seeing. On live television, fire was engulfing the whole hotel. The fire was travelling up the outside walls of the hotel. The fire was spreading up the outside of the building and then traversing around the corners to the next side. I had never seen anything like it. I said to Liz that I hoped and trusted that authorities in the UK would take note and take action.

I watched the news, read the papers and researched the cause of fire. The fire did not start inside the hotel. It started on the outside of the hotel on an external wall. A spotlight at 14th floor level short circuited and started the fire in the external cladding. The cladding was made from polyurethane and aluminium; both combustible materials. The significant factor was a gap between the component parts of the cladding which, in a fire, forms a natural flue. Therefore, a fire that starts on the outside of a building, roars up the outside of that building and then breaks into that building through external windows and sets fire to the internal rooms.

## **I was in Scotland when I saw the footage of the Grenfell Tower fire.**

My immediate conclusion was that rapid fire spread was caused by combustible external cladding. The investigation continues and to my mind highlights the need for appropriate regulation and inspection. There are 1.5 million flats in the UK that are un-mortgageable because occupants cannot prove that their walls meet the safety guidance that was tightened after the Grenfell fire.

### **Footnote**

*The era of the "Smoke Eating Fireman" came to an end in the 1960s when so much synthetic material began to be used in the fabric and contents of buildings. Breathing Apparatus had been oxygen sets which were intricate and complicated and took well over an hour to service after each and every fire. Therefore firemen were reluctant to use them. They would rather risk breathing in the smoke.*

*When the fire service was denationalised in 1949, the life expectancy of a fireman on retirement was some eighteen months because of the smoke damage to lungs. When I joined in 1963, that life expectancy had risen to four and a half years. The introduction of positive pressure compressed air breathing apparatus introduced sets which were far easier and quicker to service and absolutely essential to combat the hazards of burning plastics and iso-cyanates.*

*The life expectancy of retired firefighters has increased.*

**Books for Kagera:** Great news! A donation of over 200 books from the Cathedral library has at last started its journey to Kagera Christian Theological College (KCTC). Transport has been delayed by the pandemic, but the four boxes of books are now on their way.

A big thank you to Ross Lunney, of Spray Shipping, Felixstowe for generously arranging to ship them to Tanzania free of charge. He says "I'm delighted to transport these books to help support the college and our link with Kagera Diocese."



## **Rotarian Ross in the news.**

Here's a bit of good community service - well done Ross.

This item was featured in the weekly newsletter from our diocesan cathedral in Bury St Edmunds.



Betty Whyman and her 39 cards, flowers and chocolates received for her 25th April 2019 90th birthday.

## BETTY CONSTANCE WHYMAN

25<sup>th</sup> April 1929 - 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020

"BE HAPPY" was my Mum's calm answer to most of life's trials and tribulations. And I believe a short history of her life shows that this was true in her own case.

Born in the village of Digswell Hertfordshire in 1929, to Mabel and Frank REED the village blacksmith. Her childhood was calm, homely, and revolved around village life. She and her local school friends used to play around her father's forge, along the brook, and in the lanes and fields nearby. She and her parents regularly visited aunts, uncles and cousins particularly Joan Evans who became her life-long best friend with visits to Joan and her village of Chelsworth, Suffolk becoming a regular and eagerly sought delight from youthful years well into old age.

As a teenager and young adult Mum learned the skills of short-hand, nursery school teaching, first aid, singing in the church choir, and dancing to the top tunes of the day. And it was at a local village dance that she met John, my Dad, beginning that long and life enhancing union, marrying in 1951.

Family was all important to my Mum, and along came me, David, and my brother Neil. Neil subsequently adding three grand-daughters Eliza, Louise and Ellie to Mum's happy circle. Due to my Dad's Fire Service career our family moved house and location several times, particularly enjoying periods in Lowestoft, often going to the beach there, and then living here in Ipswich – where we have been since 1974.

My Mum took a part-time job in a local chemist shop, and also with encouragement from my Dad gained the confidence to be more outgoing, to join in charity work, and to earn the very welcome friendship of all those gathered here today.

We have selected the photos in the Order Of Service (and more embedded in the online facility) to show my Mum's progression through life, and her ongoing deep family love. On viewing and selecting these photos quite often I find my own image alongside her, or otherwise I notice that quite often it was me that took the photo. What that says is that I am proud and happy to be her son, and that she is eternally proud and happy to be my mother. As she often advised "Be Happy".

David Whyman, son

**Many members will recall John Whyman who was Club President 1988-1989**

*John was a senior member of Suffolk Fire Service and introduced our illustrious Hon Sec Tony Baker to Rotary. John's wife Betty in turn introduced Liz Baker to Inner Wheel.*

**Betty continued to live in Epsom Drive after John died in 2001 and well supported by her son David, remained a staunch member of Ipswich East Inner Wheel. Her other son Neil lives in the USA and was prevented from travelling home by the pandemic.**

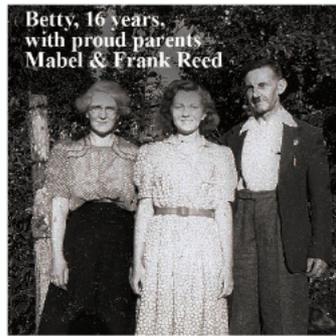
**IW Members made sure Betty attended meetings and kept in touch when her health began to fail. Betty moved to Norwood for the last months of her life where she was reunited with her friend Claire Lunney.**

*IW Member Rev Catherine Forsdike conducted Betty's Funeral and Service of Thanksgiving for her life on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November and, with family permission, photographs and words about Betty have been reproduced here and overleaf.*

*Betty had a simple philosophy for life and she certainly lived by it: "Be Happy".*



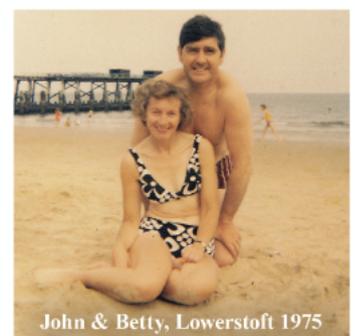
Childhood in Digswell



Betty, 16 years, with proud parents Mabel & Frank Reed



John, David, Neil & Betty, 1961



John & Betty, Lowerstoft 1975



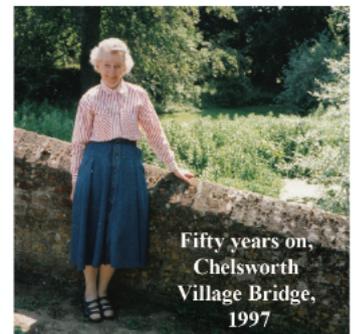
Red Cross Uniform, age 17



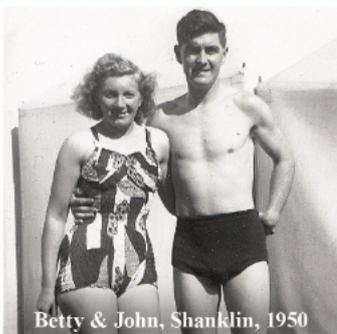
Chelsworth Village Bridge 1947



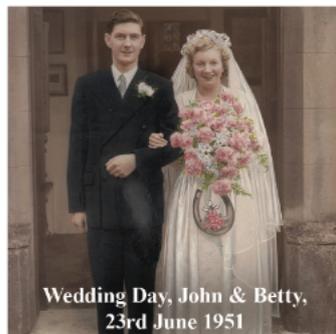
25th Wedding Anniversary, 1976



Fifty years on, Chelsworth Village Bridge, 1997



Betty & John, Shanklin, 1950



Wedding Day, John & Betty, 23rd June 1951



Happy 80th Birthday Mum, 25th April 2009



Christmas Dinner, 2018

**Betty's grand-daughter Eliza wrote and delivered these touching memories of her Grandmother.**

My Nana lived by three philosophies throughout her long, loving, happy, life. She lived by these philosophies in abundance. The first was to never forget your roots and cherish your fond memories. She would often go down memory lane, telling us about her childhood in Digswell, meeting a little girl named Joan who became her lifelong best friend, how she met my Grandpa at a dance, how she took David and my dad Neil around in their prams and being besotted with her little boys, how proud she was of her boys becoming men, how she happily welcomed her three grandchildren into her family, and other fond memories like going to the beach, working at a chemist, helping school children when she was a teenager, stealing warm fresh bits of bread behind her mother's back, and travelling to Switzerland, Ireland, Belgium, America and other places with grandpa and her sons.

I can't pick a single favourite memory with her, but I remember one Christmas at her house. Her and my parents put flour on the floor and had pressed boot prints in them for us to see on Christmas morning. I was equally delighted and surprised that Santa had been silly enough to leave such evidence on Nana's carpet. Now I obviously see the gesture for what it was, some planning and clean up on her part just to see the delight on our faces.

I do know my favourite story that she told us. Years ago, Nana wanted a fresh look as a redhead. Somehow she managed to dye her hair a hideous orange colour. Horrified, she dashed to the barber's\* shop. The barber immediately cried "What on earth have you done to your hair?!" We always laughed at that story, and I still hope that among her thousands of treasured photos we'll find evidence of her tragic hair day. No such luck so far.

Those photos and memories always made her happy, which brings us to her second philosophy. Remember to be happy. Happiness is the most important thing in life. She would tell me this every visit, hold my hand firmly and lock eyes to make sure the message was understood. "I mean it!" she would always finish with. She clearly led by example with this. She lived her whole life as she preached it, with love in her heart, easily smiling, eager to laugh and light in her eyes. She loved people, her family and friends especially, and she loved spreading joy with compliments and a friendly chat.

I can't understate how much she treasured the happiness of those around her and happiness in life. It was her happiness, love and optimism that made her life so rich and fulfilling. Her third philosophy was also rich and fulfilling in some ways. Some of you might not know this, but for years she slept with her favourite treat in her bedside table, something I am fully on-board with. She always believed that you can never have enough chocolate - and who can argue with that?

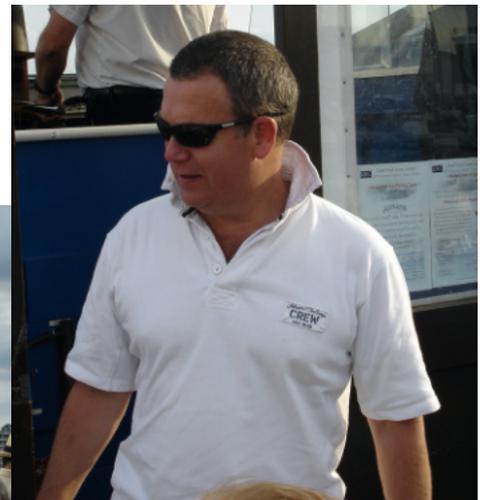
(\*In the US, a female hairdresser is called a barber)

# Photographic Memories of a beautiful evening excursion on 'The River Lady' and Handover 2010.

John Clements handed over the Presidential Chain to Mark Murphy. Alan Forsdike became Senior Vice-President and Steve Flory Junior Vice-President in July 2010.

(Ed: I remembering texting my daughter to say we would be late home as there was a river 'traffic jam' whilst we waited for boats coming out of the dock.)





## Forward Programme of Meetings

Tuesday 8th Dec 6.30pm	Zoom Club Meeting - Guest Speakers: Ewan Dodds and Bill Izzard (Bill's talk is called "Can you work round the chicken please? How I went from dishing the dirt to digging the dirt - tabloids to turf") <i>Duty Rotarians: Jack Earwaker (VoT), Nigel Farthing (notes)</i>
Tuesday 22 Dec 6.30pm	Zoom Christmas Meeting - Speaker/Quiz <i>Duty Rotarians: Karen Finch (VoT), Steve Flory (notes)</i>
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> January	Club Council Meeting
Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> January	Zoom Business Meeting ( <i>no duty Rotarians required</i> )
Tuesday 19th January	Zoom Club Meeting <i>Duty Rotarians: John Goodship (VoT), Allan Gosling (notes)</i>

**If you are not able to fulfil the duty allocated as Vote-of-Thanks or Note-taker, please arrange your own swaps and notify the Hon Sec and Newsletter Editor.**  
**Speaker Finder Steve Jones would love to hear from you with ideas for future speakers.**

Every year Rotarians look forward to organising an outing for disadvantaged children.

This year it has not been possible.

The good news is that KidsOut has teamed up with District 1080 to provide a box of toys for every child under the age of 13 years old and living in a Refuge due to domestic violence.

Thanks to Ipswich East's donation of £425, 17 children living in a refuge in Ipswich will receive a box of toys as a gift for Christmas.

Each box will contain toys worth over £80. KidsOut plan to deliver a box to every child in the District in this situation this December. Their locations have had to be kept secret for obvious reasons of safety, however all the Club's Toy Boxes will be individually Rotary branded and feature our club's name.

Happy Christmas!

David Chittick



**This space is for you!**

*If you've anything to share let the Editor know.*

*The advantage of a digital newsletter is that it can be infinitely expanded to accommodate anything worthy of publication.*

*(Send to [alan.forsdike@gmail.com](mailto:alan.forsdike@gmail.com) and he will decide!)*