

Chapter 8: INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Another Diamond Jubilee followed in 1980, that of Bishops of the Diocese being honorary members of the Club. The Right Rev. Ronald Williams belonged to the Club for 25 of those years. He retired at the end of 1978 and went to London, but only a few weeks later he died suddenly. A tribute to him written by Past President the Rev. A.H. Kirkby and read to the Club in Dr. Kirkby's unavoidable absence, included the following: "Many memories fill our minds.

We recall Ronald Williams as the friendly man, ever ready to share as fully as possible in the life of the Club. He sought no privileged place . . . Though his office and status would have justified that. He was happy to sit at any table with any member, getting to know each and all as best he could". "He generally arrived some ten minutes before the start, and used the time well in speaking to many. He was glad to be a member of Rotary, and used his membership of the Movement to visit other Clubs as he traveled around the world. He liked the friendship offered in so many places . . ." Dr. Kirby, supporting the election a few months later of Bishop Williams' successor, wittily referred to the classifications of the new Bishop and himself as "Religion-Wholesale" and "Religion-Retail".

After the great fund-raising effort of the Club's jubilee, everyone was glad of a short respite, but in 1979 came a cause which proved irresistible. This was the Lord Mayors appeal for £500,000 to provide a whole-body scanner for the Royal Infirmary. It was an appeal which captured the imagination of the people of city and county as never before, and it was right that the Rotary Club of Leicester should do something to help. By taking all the tickets for one night's performance at the Haymarket Theatre and selling them as a package to include supper, and from the production of a souvenir programme well filled with advertisements, a sum of £3,200 was raised. This was handed to the Lord Mayor on the stage during the interval by the Presidents of the Rotary and Inner Wheel, for the operation had been mostly ably supported by Inner Wheel.

Leicester Rotarians have always been widely involved in many good works outside the Club. Indeed on more than on occasion a "census" has been taken of that involvement. Another came in 1979. This time it was inspired by the experience of the President of two years earlier, Brian Thompson. He had represented the Club at a meeting in the City Council Chamber called by the Lord Mayor to inaugurate the Leicester Organisation for the Relief of Suffering. Reporting to the Club the following Monday he said that the meeting had been attended by representatives of virtually all local

social service and charitable organisations and that, as he entered the Council Chamber he at first thought he was at a Rotary meeting – and with a better attendance than usual – so large was the Rotary representation among those many organisations!

Undoubtedly there was a measure of jocular exaggeration in that remark, but he was indicating the very wide and active involvement of Leicester Rotarians in voluntary work outside the Club. And when the 1979 census was taken it showed that well over one hundred local service organisations, charitable, cultural, social, educational, medial, environmental or religious had the assistance of members of the Rotary Club of Leicester. These included those caring for the blind, the deaf and sufferers from muscular dystrophy, arthritis and rheumatism; the Leicester General Charities, Thomas White Charities and H.J. Riddleston Charity; The Charity Organisation Society, Red Cross, St. John ambulance, Y.M.C.A., old persons' homes, the Anchor Club for Discharged Prisoners, the Samaritans, the Area Healthy Authority, County Nursing Association, Medical Research Foundation, special schools for the mentally handicapped, the Adult Literacy Scheme, the Area Disablement Advisory Committee, International Friendship Association, the Scouts, Sea Cadets and Girl Guides, Boy's Clubs, Playing Fields Association, Council for Sport and Recreation, the Coty of Leicester Schools Orchestra, Leicester Symphony Orchestra, Leicester Male Voice Choir, Leicester Competitive Festival of Music, the Citizens' Advice Bureau, Movement for World Evangelisation, Historic Churches Preservation Trust, Trust for Nature Conservation, Rural Community Council, Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Farming and Wild Life Advisory Group and the Committee for Small Industries in Rural Areas.

The List goes on. More than a tenth of the Club were Justices of the Peace, many were school governors, several on the Court and Council of the University of Leicester and the Council of Loughborough University; others Honorary Canons of the Cathedral, local preachers, church wardens; there was a large representation involved with the Leicester Drama Society and Theatre Trust, and also the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, whose list of Presidents included many Rotarians. Three members of the Club have received the highest honour the coty can confer, that of Honorary Freeman, for their services to the community. They were Arthur I Groves in 1926, Charles R. Keene in 1962 and Mac Goldsmith in 1971. For his services locally, Charles Keene was knighted in 1969.

Some of the many services available to the people of Leicester and Leicestershire were started by the Rotary Club of Leicester. Others owe their existence to the stimulus provided by the Club in the first place. The

third object of Rotary is “The application of the ideal of service by every Rotarian to his personal, business and community life”; it is hoped that this story shows that Leicester Rotarians have been abundantly true to that ideal.