

Motivational President Provided Dover Rotary Club with Exceptional Year

Peter Sherred

As the Rotary year ended on 30th June Rotary Club of Dover President, Tony Cook, could have looked back on an extraordinarily successful year in leading the club through the incredibly challenging period created by the Covid pandemic. With face-to-face meetings unable to take place all meetings of the Rotary Club members had been virtual, held on Zoom chaired by Tony, which proved an excellent way of maintaining the fellowship of members. But Tony realised more had to be done and so initiated a weekly Newsletter which he edited and produced for club members during the many months of the early Covid clampdown. This weekly production was much appreciated by club members, several of whom contributed articles to it.

With traditional ways of fundraising being restricted, Tony came up with the idea of a Christmas video with club members singing "Jingle Bells" to lift peoples' spirits. While some club members made fools of themselves demonstrating their singing prowess, or lack of it, their efforts turned a fun event into a good fundraising exercise over social media. Monies raised were for vouchers for the café at the Outreach Centre which caters for the homeless.

Leading from the front, Tony was a volunteer, with many of his club members, at Dover Health Centre for the vaccination process for local people which has been ongoing since the winter through to the present and the volunteering effort has helped make a great success of the local vaccination centre's administration of the Covid vaccine. At the beginning of the Rotary year, he was present in Dover's hospital when the original plaque commemorating former war-time surgeon and local GP Gertrude Toland, was mounted on a wall in the Reception Area alongside its replacement. The original plaque

had been commissioned by the Rotary Club but had been thought lost when the former hospital was vacated and demolished, so the Club provided a replacement for the new hospital. The original plaque was subsequently found and is now on public display once again and Tony was present, with the Past President of the club who had witnessed the original plaque being unveiled, when both plaques were first exhibited alongside each other.

During the year, under his leadership, the Dover Club's Rotarian members raised money to save Dover Film Festival which had been badly hit by the lockdown and this has enabled Honorary Freeman of the town, Mike McFarnell, to look forward to the future with optimism. Tony organised the club's litter pick contribution to the 'Keep Britain Tidy Campaign' in June when considerable amounts of litter and other rubbish were removed from Green Lane right down through the Buckland estate to Brookfield Avenue. Under his organisation Rotarians from both Dover clubs (South Foreland being the other club) participated in this significant service activity. In addition, Tony's ambition to help the Dover Outreach Centre at Victory House in Snargate Street saw the club raising money for renewal of the boilers in the premises. A cheque for £5000 was handed over to Noel Beamish of the Centre in August.

In June Tony was at the forefront of an exercise by club members to "adopt" a circular flower bed, at Granville Gardens, from Dover District Council enabling club members to plant hundreds of flowering plants in the circular sea front feature which had originally been the location of a fountain. Dover District Council provided the site and the plants, but Tony was, with his helpers, reduced to his knees as he led the planting exercise – all for the benefit of Dover.

He recently led a working party to clear a town centre footpath between Millais Road and Barton View Terrace.

Tony was a former Rotarian of the Sandwich Club and has twice been made a Paul Harris Fellow for his outstanding service ethic. When his successor as President suffered a bereavement Tony could not stand down as usual at the end of the Rotary year but remained in post as Acting President of the club. He was present, with other club members, at the commemoration to Roger Marsden at Temple Commell at the Bank Holiday

weekend. He has been Dover Club's 98th President and will be a hard act to follow. After the transfer to his successor on 30 September at the club's meeting place at Whitfield, he continues to serve the club as its secretary. Dover should be profoundly grateful for his leadership of the town's Rotary Club and for the example he has set during a particularly difficult year (plus three months) in his service activities and the club's fund-raising by his focus on positivism rather than negativism during long periods of enforced restrictions. He lives in Whitfield with his wife Sandra.

Dover's Successful Youth Competition

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On Saturday 7 August the President of the Rotary Club of Dover, Tony Cook, presided over a successful prizegiving following a tremendous response to the Youth Competition run by the Club and organised by its President-Elect Roger Knight, and his wife Melanie. There was a very good response with over seventy entries, as well as a very high standard produced by entrants to the competition, covering a range of artistic talent from paintings and drawings to writings and computer presentations. One of the entries was a song, written and recorded by an entrant who won the President's Prize.

The judging of the competition was extremely challenging because of the high standard of all entries but decisions had to be made and those who were successful were rewarded with certificates and cash prizes. The Rotary District Youth Officer, Jean Shrub, attended the prizegiving and was impressed by the excellent nature of the competition run by Dover Rotary Club for the benefit of the young people of Dover and its immediate surroundings.

Following receipt of all the entries, the organisers of the competition not only had to deal with the difficult task of judging but also had the challenging task of displaying them for a two-day Public Exhibition in St Mary's Parish Centre, enabling people to have the opportunity of

appreciating the high standard of the submissions. A principal actor in the preparation, judging and setting up of the exhibition, as well as organising refreshments over the two-day period, was Melanie Knight. The work did not end at the close of the exhibition as seventy-four certificates for all the entrants were sent to them with the return of their work.

A total of £750 prize money was provided by the Club, despite the reduced fund-raising opportunities brought about by Covid. The Leader of Dover District Council, Cllr Trevor Bartlett, a member of the judging panel, expressed his delight at the success of the competition and indicated that he would be pleased to support the event again.

At the close of the exhibition and following the presentation of prizes, President Tony Cook was pleased to be able to present a Community Service Award to representatives of Together4Dover. The award was received by Deacon Michelle Legumi of the Beacon Church. Noel Beamish, prime mover of the Dover Outreach Centre, which caters for the homeless in the town, was presented with a cheque for £5000 from the Rotary Club to assist in the cost of a new boiler. This had been President Tony Cook's project for the year.