

STORT VALLEY ROTARY

NEWSLETTER

August 2021



Saturday 14 August
A Picnic by invitation
at the home of
Gordon & Mary Morrison

PRESIDENT'S PREAMBLE



Fellow Rotarians and Friends,

The last 18 months have been long and challenging but, although caution should prevail, we are now free to return to some form of normality.

Stort Valley Rotary are very fortunate to have been able to introduce change that will encourage recruitment of new members widening our ability to deliver more benefit. One such change has been our **#helpingherts** initiative.

The Helping Herts Campaign has been established to raise awareness of Rotary along with raising much needed funds for Hertfordshire Charities. In 2021 we are raising money for Hertfordshire Hospices and Citizens Advice. Next year we may support other charities. We started with empty Social Media pages and no awareness. This has, over the first month, changed dramatically. We have been building our audience on social media through brand awareness and community engagement. We are now at a point where we have built up a warm audience of followers to encourage to donate and take part in our

Find us at:
stortvalleyrotary.com

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fundraising events. So far, we have reached almost 35,000 accounts on Facebook and 5,000 accounts on Instagram with good engagement on both platforms. We are using this alongside a strong email campaign to push our summer events and activities and increase donor activity.

Treasure Hunts have been set up in various town across the county, including Bishop's Stortford, a county wide picnic will be taking place on 21st August, a booklet has been published highlighting zero cost days out along with many other initiatives that will be rolled out during the remainder of the year.

I encourage you to become involved by going to www.helpingherts.com

Kind regards,
 Gordon Morrison, President

WHO MURDERED THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER?



If we forget all the history that we ever learnt in school there is one story that no-one will forget, that of the fate of the two Princes in the Tower in 1483.

Alan Capener teased out this intriguing historical murder mystery which was brought to public attention firstly in 1674 when two sets of bones were found under a staircase in the Tower. The ages of the bones roughly matched the ages of the princes, 13 and 10. The front of their skulls had blood stains, which gave an indication that they were probably strangled.



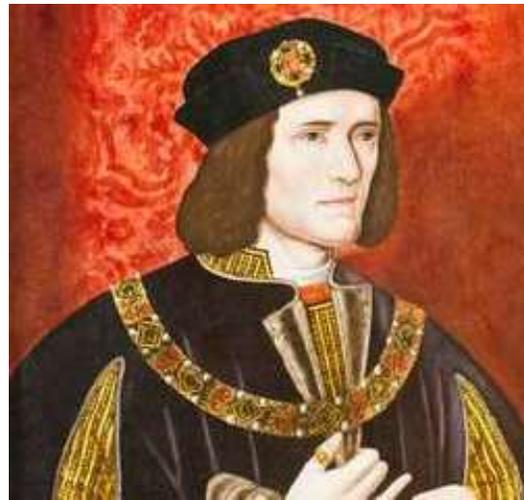
Shakespeare had also been fascinated by the story and wrote the play Richard III, based on the writings of Thomas Moore who, like Richard III's contemporaries, believed that he was the one who arranged the murder.

Dramatically, it came to public attention much more recently when, after studying a 1741 map of Leicester, historians were able to identify a car park as the site of Greyfriars' Abbey, where Richard III's body was believed to have been buried after he was killed at Bosworth. On excavating the car park, a skeleton was located and, following amazing work by modern forensic scientists, concluded to be that of Richard III. The DNA from the skeleton was found to be a match with a

woman living in Canada who was a direct descendant of Richard III's younger sister. Forensic work on the skeleton also revealed that he had suffered from scoliosis [curvature of the spine] giving credence to the tales of his physical handicap.

This really was an example of history coming to life in our century, which Alan built on in his talk. He painted a detailed picture of the struggle for power between the Yorkists and Lancastrians.

After the rather premature death of Edward IV, there were three men vying to take over the realm: Richard Duke of Gloucester, Edward's younger brother, who was appointed Protector of the Princes by Edward IV, and the Duke of Buckingham who was Richard's right-hand man. One theory is that the Duke of Buckingham might have killed them in order to incriminate Richard and Lord Hastings, Chamberlain of the Exchequer. However, Alan explained the reasons why history and current historians consider Richard III the most likely murderer.



These were very violent times and the many battles that took place resulted in the death of 2.5% of the English population.

The details of Alan's analysis can be seen by visiting Stort Valley Rotary website and following links to YouTube. The conclusion to his analysis supports the view that it was Richard who was responsible for the murder of his two nephews, the Princes in the Tower.

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY ENJOYS
SHARING THE INTERESTS OF MEMBERS**

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LOCKDOWN DOES NOT SLOW UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL'S MISSION TO IMPROVE THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE DEFICIT



The Zoom talk by senior members of the Law School at the University of Hertfordshire: Penny Carey (Dean), Diana Kirsch (Associate Dean) and Amanda Thurston (Director of the Hertfordshire Law Clinic) explained how through practical learning they benefit the community by bridging the access to justice gap. The School itself was founded some 40 years ago and is now a full service law school with over 1500 scholars from many countries. Significantly, of those attending the school, 66% are from the BAME community and 14% from low income families. Many have progressed to senior law positions, including the current High Sherriff of Hertfordshire who attended this meeting.

The school reflects the University's three key plans for Community, Diversity and Flexibility and offers a wide range of legal services to the community in Hertfordshire. Recently established clinics provide free legal advice through the School's professional staff and the free services of local solicitors. Over 200 students help and, whilst not able to give advice, gain experience of law in practice. When Lockdown hit, a service was set up within days using Zoom and has in many cases made the work easier, with high take-up and overwhelmingly positive feedback. A clinic exclusively covering domestic abuse was set up and an LGBT clinic was opened in conjunction with youth charity TOKKO and LGBT student and staff networks. A further initiative is the StreetLaw project where students visit schools, colleges and community centres to set up interactive workshops on topics such as Stop and Search and Employment Law rights, giving them experience in different aspects of law in this environment.

A number of law in practice projects were outlined and include:

"Support at Court" relates mostly to family law and is run in partnership with law courts in Watford and Hertford. Students give emotional and practical support to litigants in person prior to their attendance in court, such as sorting out and explaining the paperwork. These hearings are now held by telephone, so students provide such support a day or two beforehand.

Another, the Stevenage Welfare Benefits Appeals project, is run in conjunction with Stevenage Citizens Advice and supported by £40,000 Big Lottery funding. A specialist lawyer trains students on how to help clients get the benefits to which they are entitled. In the 6 month pilot 66 benefit issues were resolved.

Looking to the future the school wants to do more; finding new challenging ways of teaching the students and involving local organisations and charities as well as benefiting the local community with its activities.

One of these is working with Centre Point with an immigration clinic helping young asylum seekers, in conjunction with a specialist firm, Duncan Lewis.

Another is the so-called "Justice Bus", the Hertfordshire Community Mobile Advice clinic, which goes to far-flung villages in the county to provide a pop-up mobile clinic which can then provide legal advice and support locally. After several lockdown delays this pilot is planned to be launched in Autumn this year, initially in North and East Hertfordshire.



The final section of the talk explained LawWorks, the umbrella organisation who look after ProBono or free work carried out by solicitors in England and Wales. Students not

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY IS MINDFUL OF DEVELOPING INTERESTS WITHIN
OUR SOCIETY - PARTICULARLY AMONGST THE OPINION-FORMING YOUNG**

only get work experience, which can help them fast track to legal qualifications, but also networking opportunities which might help in later life.

It was suggested that Stort Valley Rotary get involved, perhaps by volunteer assistance at the law clinics (especially if any members have

a legal background) or else help with fundraising for specific projects.

The above is a summary of the very well-presented talk which can be accessed by visiting our website stortvalleyrotary.com and following links to our YouTube channel.

AGM – A LOT DONE DURING COVID-19 AND MORE TO BE DONE IN THE AFTERMATH



At our recent AGM, as usual, Peter Blascos opened with his 'grace.' Sadly this was the last occasion we will enjoy his topical and humorous stanzas as he has decided to hang up his Rotary bard boots.

Appreciation was expressed by all for always putting a smile on our faces and the pleasure he has given us over the years.



President Gordon Morrison delivered an upbeat account of our club despite Covid-19 restrictions.

Recruiting had been successful with membership at a healthy 39 although we need

to do more to attract younger members. Fundraising had been critical to a number of local and international projects with almost £33,000 distributed and often enhanced by substantial Rotary matching funds. Coram Life Education programme in our local primary schools was only kept going with our donations. Also funds via Build Aid to help

necessary alterations in schools in Kenya due to Covid-19 and the provision of solar biolites were crucial to isolated communities.

Gordon said that although it would be a great relief to get back to face-to-face meetings, we would continue to take advantage of practices we had adopted during lockdown. For instance, we will continue to use Zoom for some meetings. We need to move more into delivery mode in a changed world as restrictions are relaxed. Jim Tatchell spoke of the project he is exploring to match volunteers to activities for the many who now find regular commitment impossible but could contribute on an ad-hoc basis. Jim has been in touch with several organisations, both locally and further afield, including as Citizens Advice. Jim sees this a way of involving not only busy working-aged people but youngsters having been adversely affected by Covid-19 as they move into adulthood.



Assistant Governor Tony Stringer who attended the meeting complimented Gordon and our club for progress made during the pandemic.

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY CONTINUES TO DO GOOD
WHILST ENJOYING FRIENDSHIP & SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT**

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING ENGAGES FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS



At the end of last year Ed Anthony, Director Health and Wellbeing in Schools, talked to us about his approach to children's

mental health therapy and the pilot programme of Social Prescribing in the NHS Stort Valley Primary Care Network that he would be participating in. We invited him to return towards the end of the pilot to tell us what had been learned from it.

Members will remember that Ed and his wife have set up a social enterprise company in BS focussing on children's mental health, utilising a coaching approach of which Ed has personal experience and has been successfully practising in some of our local schools.

Social Prescribing is an NHS initiative to relieve some of the pressures on GP Surgeries that are so often the first port of call for patients for whom the conventional medical route is not necessarily the most suitable approach to improved physical or mental health. Link workers will be appointed for each network, to which patients can be referred. The link workers will be expected to take a holistic approach to people's health and wellbeing and connect people to community groups, social enterprises and other services that can help the lonely or isolated who have complex social needs that are affecting their wellbeing or need support for their mental health.

The link worker for Stort Valley has been identified and is also responsible for working with local services and activities and ensuring

their quality. Ed has been demonstrating to him the potential value of his child mental health approach. Over a 6-month period 120 people in 52 families have been engaged in one-to-one or groups of six-to-eight online sessions. 92% completed the programme and 93.5 % rated the service "good" or "excellent". This high-volume test of Ed's coaching approach has further convinced him that children's mental health issues must be tackled with the full involvement of parents. When parents really listen to their children, change happens! There can be little doubt that Ed will be a key resource in Stort Valley social prescribing.

Readers will have noted that no attempt so far has been made to paraphrase Ed's coaching model and will be intrigued to know more. Ed's website is "Mental Wellbeing in Schools" and the writings of Sydney Banks will lead to an understanding. The model is based on the proposition that what is in your mind is reality for you and we can be trapped in a way of thinking with fears, anxieties and negativity. Skilled coaching can help us break out and free us of this mindset and self-regulate. See – I was not able to resist trying!

The important conclusion is that Ed's approach is helping more and more children and the families improve mental health at a time of considerable stress.



Our thanks to Ed and our best wishes for his Social Enterprise.

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY CELEBRATES THE RANGE OF
OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY**

JIM TACHELL'S TALK TO STORT VALLEY ROTARY



Jim Tatchell, a Club member, outlined his new project, VolMatch. In a fast-changing world, this project sets out to match volunteers with opportunities to do good works. He opened by saying that even the busiest of us can

spare the odd hour or two to make a difference to a cause local to us.

The VolMatch project spun out of a comment at an Exidex meeting about 18 months ago when one lady said "My husband wants to do something useful for once! He's got a couple of hours spare this Saturday afternoon and can't find anything in the community to use that time productively." VolMatch will empower such people with the opportunity to use their occasional ad-hoc voluntary time doing what they want, when they want and where they want.

The method used will be predominantly via an app, where you can see what opportunities are available for your chosen time, date and location. Then it's just up to you to choose what takes your fancy!

Jim is establishing a partnership with CVS Broxbourne and East Herts, Bishop's Wellbeing, Citizens Advice East Herts and

Stort Valley Rotary to launch a pilot of the app. It will provide working proof of the post-Covid legacy of wanting to help others. At the same time, it will allow users to discover new opportunities, make new friendships and to be part of the "VolMatch tribe."

It will also help companies build a positive corporate culture, improving their ESG score while helping to make good use of their CSR aspirations and volunteer days. This is one route that will ensure its sustainability and long-term viability.

The aim is to launch the Bishop's Stortford and surrounding villages pilot before the end of 2021 to prove the concept and iron out any teething troubles. After that the plan is to roll out across Hertfordshire and West Essex, then nationally and maybe even internationally one day.



Those who would like to learn more of this exciting new project or wishing to take part should contact Jim by:

Email: jim@volmatch.org or

Phone: 07412 941966

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY IS INTERESTED IN
THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITY & OUR NATION**

THE BURGEONING SEA LIFE OF THE MORAY FIRTH



Claire Matthews introduced herself as a Herts resident in her childhood who went to Aberdeen University and studied Zoology and then Marine Science in California. Her return to the UK coincided with the opening of a small Aquarium in Macduff on the Moray Firth where she has been manager since the late 1990's.

The Moray Firth has 880 kilometres of varied coastline with steep cliffs, sandy bays and rocky shorelines. Some of the rocks are 500 million years old. The Firth is mostly shallow, averaging 54m but with a southern trench which is 200m deep. It supports a wide variety of sea life which benefit from a good supply of food which thrives in the cold water flowing into the Firth. There are numerous sea birds including white tailed sea eagles, ospreys and a large breeding colony of gannets. In the water you can find seals, bottlenose dolphins, orca, minke whales and a wide range of fish species, most of which are represented in the aquarium. A major feature is the thriving kelp beds which offer shelter for smaller fish and help to reduce the force of large waves in storms.

11 salmon rivers flow into the Firth including the famous Spey. About 170,000 people live round the Firth and the main industry till it crashed in the 70's was herring fishing. Today fishing is mainly from offshore vessels and Fraserburgh is a major centre. A boat building tradition survives and now there is the Beatrice Oil Field in the middle of the Firth as well as a windfarm. Tourism is becoming

increasingly important which helps the Aquarium, providing more than 50,000 visitors a year.

The Aquarium is located on the relatively sheltered southern side of the Firth and Claire made her presentation from a position in front of the main doughnut-shaped tank which is open to the sky. Claire's talk was enlivened by her pointing out the individual species passing behind her in the tank. She covered everything from breeding and survival strategies to the peculiar change which takes place in flatfish. These start life like normal fish larvae with eyes in the normal place but after 5 days the eyes move and the body flattens so that the eyes end up on top of the head. These fish feed and live on the sandy bottom and can be difficult to spot.

She also explained that most fish have a swim bladder that enables them to hang in the water with no effort but sharks, skate and rays have no swim bladder and have to swim actively all the time to move deeper. They also differ from other fish which have a bony skeleton in that they have no bones but a rigid body formed by cartilage. The tank also contains a Flapper Skate, the largest species in the world and critically endangered with fewer numbers than the giant panda.



In answer to a question Claire confirmed that big fish do eat the smaller ones, which they try to control. The tank is a competitive environment and Claire and her team swim in the tank to ensure certain species get the correct amount of the right food.

She confirmed that crabs and lobsters are thriving in the tank but they keep a low profile as many fish see them as a tasty meal.

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY CELEBRATES THE
DIVERSITY OF LIFE IN & AROUND OUR COUNTRY**

STEVE HAS A SPICY TALES TO TELL OF OUR TOWN!



Member Steve Mustill's enthusiasm and detailed knowledge of his subject brought the town's history alive for our members on the first time we were able to meet face-to-face for nearly a year. We met at

St Michael's Church, which is mainly of Norman origin but built on the site on an original Saxon church.



Being alongside a river and with good road connections to London, Bishop's Stortford's position favoured industrial development which started in the 18th century. The capital provided a seemingly insatiable demand for our beer, so breweries, along with other industries like mills and tanneries proliferated along the river. We learned about the smells and waste these enterprises created and, of the poor pay on offer. We were soon disillusioned of any ideas we had of an idyllic country lifestyle for the masses. Prosperity though came for the bosses, with Windhill being the favoured place to live. Many fine buildings of the late Georgian and Victorian era remain today, set alongside some fine Elizabethan half-timbered premises like the Boars Head pub across from the Church. In its time, the church had its own brewery which helped fuel religious festivals (Hockingtide).

Tales of tunnels and ghosts added further colour to Steve's narrative.

But the spiciest elements of the talk come from the town's royal connections, with Charles II featuring prominently. Stortford was his favoured stopover on his way to the races at Newmarket. Sometimes he brought his mate Samuel Pepys with him and they seemed to have had a right royal time here - and very liberal with their favours they were too! They even set up what is claimed to be the country's first 'Madame' in premises we know today as the Tourist Information Office. Charles stayed over the road in the then George and Dragon Inn which is now just called "The George."

However, there were darker elements of Charles's reign too. Hertfordshire had supported Cromwell and the Commonwealth and we learned how the restored Monarchy treated a local conspirator, Richard Rumbold. He had made a failed attempt to assassinate the King's brother. Although tried far away at the assizes in Edinburgh and hung drawn and quartered there, part of his body was brought to the town and hung on the gibbet in the Market Place as a warning to other possible dissenters. We stood on the very spot alongside the present-day Corn Exchange.



The Market Place was very much bigger in earlier days prior to the fine Corn Exchange being built in the 19th century. Thankfully, it was saved from demolition in the 1950's following a campaign led by the poet John Betjeman. The town's slaughterhouse was originally set above the Market Place with detritus swept down Devoils Lane (then

STORT VALLEY ROTARY IS ALWAYS FASCINATED BY THE HISTORY OF OUR TOWN - PARTICULARLY THE MORE COLOURFUL ASPECTS

known as Dunghill Alley) no doubt adding further to the stench emanating from the river.

We moved onto the Castle Park and learned about the town's early Saxon history and the Norman Waytemore Castle, one of a string of castles effectively the front line of the early Norman Conquest. The town's jail was here too and, if incarceration itself was not enough, it was so near the river that its residents were at times submerged up to their chests.

Our final stop was at War Memorial in Castle Park where we were told about a WWII combatant named Zimmerman. Although he fought for us, it was thought, that because of his name, he might possibly have German connections, so his name was omitted from the memorial.

Steve does other tours of the town and whetted our appetites with snippets from them. So maybe some of us will be able to join another of his fascinating talks.

FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

NO FORMAL MEETINGS DURING AUGUST

Saturday 14 August	Picnic by invitation at the home of Gordon & Mary Morrison
Tuesday 14 September	Club Evening
Tuesday 28 September	Speaker Evening – Gertjan Kaspers - Paediatric Oncologist – a Global View
Tuesday 12 October	Club Evening
Tuesday 26 October	Speaker Evening – tbc
Tuesday 9 November	Club Evening
Tuesday 23 November	Speaker Evening – Julie Marson MP - tbc

www.stortvalleyrotary.com



E: stortvalleyrotary@gmail.com

T: 01279 881607