

# STORT VALLEY ROTARY

## NEWSLETTER

August 2022



**President's Dinner  
Hosted by Gordon Morrison  
at Hanbury Manor  
Monday 19 September**

## PRESIDENT'S PREAMBLE



Fellow Rotarians and Friends

Life at Stort Valley Rotary continues to evolve as we continue to help others while, at the same time, enjoying our social time together.

Our digital engagement across Hertfordshire

through our Helping Herts initiative is growing, with increased awareness and numbers of followers. Our Helping Herts Week 4th to 8th July was a success finishing up with the selection of our Herts Hero - Lyn Moore. The selection panel was Sally Burton, the Hertfordshire High Sheriff, Briega Leahy, Chief Executive of the Herts Chamber of Commerce, Jim Tatchell and myself. We were delighted to have received 22 nominations all of which were of the highest quality and just proves how supportive the people from across Hertfordshire are. Our society is so dependent on the voluntary sector and Stort Valley Rotary continues to play an important part. Visit our Website [www.helpingherts.com](http://www.helpingherts.com) and learn about the charities we are supporting and then download our Herts Activity Guide.

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In June a number of the Club members visited the Saffron Hall to listen to excerpts from Roger and Hammerstein musicals which was excellent and in the middle of July, we enjoyed a very hot summer picnic and barbeque entertained by the Bishop's Stortford Band. We were delighted to be joined by guests from Harlow Tye, Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford Rotary Clubs, along with representatives from our Helping Herts Charities. It was wonderful to meet everyone.

Fun does not stop there. In August one of our members, Steve Mustill, will be leading a history tour around Bishop's Stortford and we will be visiting the excellent Historic Signs that the Club erected last year. In September we are holding a Club Dinner at Hanbury Manor where we will be joined by a number of Hertfordshire VIPs along with guests of our club.

We are a very active club and would like to encourage new members to join with us. Find more details at [stortvalleyrotary.com](http://stortvalleyrotary.com)

Kind regards,

Gordon Morrison, President

Find us at:

[stortvalleyrotary.com](http://stortvalleyrotary.com)



Rotary

Stort Valley

## PRESIDENT GORDON MORRISON'S AGM REPORT



President Gordon Morrison welcomed Anne Moriarty, who was standing in for Alan Swash our Assistant Governor who unfortunately was unable to join us. In his President's Report, he said:

"As a club we have been very busy and have achieved a lot over the last 12 months. We have very much moved the club into the digital world. This has left many of our members feeling a little uncomfortable as, at times; it has made me. Many of you however have been involved in other ways.

Rotary, as an organisation, has huge potential but only if very dramatic change is implemented quickly. Sadly, this does not seem to be happening, membership numbers continue to be a challenge and the average age of membership continues to increase. Perhaps, how our Club has changed over the last two years may be the direction of travel for Rotary as a whole.

Enough of the problems of others - how is Stort Valley Rotary delivering?

Our speaker evenings have now moved to one evening a month with an excellent list of speakers. In the last year we have had 10 excellent speakers and over the next few months we have, on 28th June, "Cheerful" Charlie Ireland, a partner in Ceres Rural but better known through his involvement alongside Jeremy Clarkson in Diddly Squat Farm. We also have on 27th September the leader of Hertfordshire County Council sharing his experiences as a County politician, on 25th October Rowan McKellar talking about her experience at the Tokyo Olympics and her preparations for the Paris Olympics. In November on 22nd we have Julie Marson our MP talking, I hope, about one of her passions Young People Cancer.

The highlight for 2022 was the presentations by four school pupils on the Environment. Zoe & Yvette from Hockerill Anglo European College, Bishop's Stortford, Savannah from

Tain Royal Academy, and my granddaughter Sophie from Lambrook and talked about different environmental challenges. Their presentation was submitted to the Rotary UK wide Environmental competition and secured first prize in the Senior Category. Hopefully you will see coverage of this on printed and digital platforms over the next week.

Our Club evenings are also once per month, but we have added in at least one outing per month. These have in general been poorly attending but we all have busy lives. The Club evenings and the outings have been excellent fun so I would encourage more to join in. Thanks to Susan and Colin for setting out the programme.

Last Sunday evening Irene organised for us to attend an evening at Saffron Hall where we the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra entertained us with a selection of well-known Rogers and Hammerstein music. It was of the highest quality, thank-you Irene.

On 16th July we have our annual club picnic in my Garden and on 19th September we are holding a Stort Valley Club dinner at Hanbury Manor. Both events will have excellent entertainment so could I encourage you to come along. You are welcome to invite friends.

We have also got back into direct fundraising this Easter by re-introducing the Pub Easter Egg raffle. This year we supported the charity of the District Governor Keith Brownlie Essex & Herts Air Ambulance. We raised just over £1,100 thanks to Derek and Gwenda ably assisted by Martin and Irene.

Another achievement has been the erection of 4 historic signs around Bishop's Stortford. Thank-you Steve & Derek. This required very delicate discussions with the Town Council, The Historic Society, and the Museum. What was even more amazing was that we managed to get the Town Council to fund the project through a run-off European Grant. A lasting legacy for the club. Perhaps we could tackle another two this year?

Internationally we have supported three projects in Kenya: -

- Six small solar micro-generation systems providing lighting, radio and phone charging to off grid families. This is low cost and high impact

- The conversion of triple desks to individual ones and providing mobile hand washing stands to safeguard the children against Covid infection

- And lastly, Solar Generation, again in Southern Kenya, which allows a whole hospital to be self-sufficient as regards power. The impact we have been able to support is impressive.

So that takes me to Stort Valley's registered charity, Helping Herts. I am well aware that many of you feel uninvolved. I can only apologise but the mysteries of Digital marketing and Social Media is also testing Jim Tatchell and especially myself.

You should be aware that developing this initiative is taking a considerable amount of investment which is been covered by a Charitable Foundation established by Mary & me. The potential to deliver long term benefit is huge. We took a similar approach to Clic Sargent and World Child Cancer who are now supporting over 12,000 children with Cancer annually in the UK and throughout the world without our support.

So many people are in need of financial support and our traditional fundraising initiatives can only have a limited impact. Helping Herts is Stort Valley Rotary's vehicle to deliver so much more.

When you go on these journeys you never know where it will take you. As you know our current journey took Jim and me on a 180 mile walk around Hertfordshire and has raised over £50,000 for 12 wonderful children's charities. Our careers to date have allowed us to meet a fascinating cross section of people so we have leaned on them hard to support this initiative.

These journeys come with many highs and lows. The highlights are:-

- The wonderful team that we have put together
- The insurance benefits of being part of the Rotary organisation
- The level of innovation that is constantly coming through

- The financial support we have already been able to give Hertfordshire Charities

- The digital platform expertise that we have been able to share with Hertfordshire Charities

- The improved awareness of Stort Valley Rotary

- The flexibility of Stort Valley Rotary's own Fundraising Platform

The low points:-

- The failure of Hertfordshire County Council to put us in contact with their network of schools

- Our failure, so far, to attract new members through the initiative

In 2021 we were able to raise £200,000 for 7 Hertfordshire Hospices and 10 Citizens Advice offices. 66% of the funds went to Citizens Advice offices reflecting their higher involvement.

Our target for 2022 has been set at £250,000

We have 3 further initiatives set for this year:-

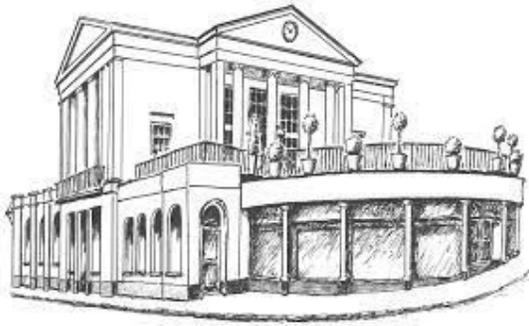
- Helping Herts Week 4th – 9th July
- The Great Big Walk which will see our 12 chosen children's charities walking the entire Hertfordshire Way on 24th September. One section each of course. They have all set up their own fundraising page on our Fundraising Platform and we anticipate that their supporters will follow them with their own pages.

- In November we are holding an online raffle.

Sustainability of this Helping Herts initiative is an absolute priority, and my thinking here is that we will require a full-time member of staff to manage it going forward but not for a few years. Having a full-time staff member will also support the running of the club and aid our membership recruitment. It is my view that this initiative has the potential to raise £500,000 annually.

Let us see where the journey takes us. I know you are not all directly involved with everything that we do but it is only with your support and patience that we are achieving what we are."

## CIVIC FEDERATION FIGHT FOR BISHOP'S STORTFORD



Paul Dean gave us a very informative talk on the history, role and current concerns of the Bishops Stortford Civic Federation [BSCF]

The origin of the Civic Federation was in the Civic Society, a group formed in 1966 of local residents to fight the proposal of a major redevelopment in the centre of Bishop Stortford. Its president was Henry Moore and it was successful as the plans were thrown out. Then in 2004 in the light of the plans put forward to redevelop Jackson Square and the Riverside car park, it was decided to approach the town's active residents' associations. In 2006 it was agreed the residents' associations would be corporate members and along with the Civic Society would make up the Civic Federation.

The Federation's purpose is to promote, for the public benefit, the improvement of Bishops Stortford and its surroundings. To this end it examines proposed developments and comments on them. It informs members of developments/issues and provides a social media site to show updates and an overview of residents' opinions. It also acts as an umbrella for the towns' residents' associations.

It aims to be a non-statutory stake holder, engaging and meeting with the statutory bodies responsible for the decisions that will determine the future of the town. Paul

continued by describing its aims in more detail covering subjects such as town planning, transport and parking, the town centre, open spaces and recreation, education, health and other services, Stansted Airport and the Currey Award.

BSCF also participated in revising the Neighbourhood plans, in the Shaping Stortford Steering Group and the recently formed Stortford Partnership, whose members comprise an elected member from each council, an executive officer, BS BID as well as the Federation.

The Currey award was set up in the early 1970s to recognise high standards of design of buildings, landscape and the environment and is awarded annually if there are places which qualify.

The Civic Federation has an active Facebook page as well as their website and they try to have an article in each copy of the Flyer.

Paul finished his talk by encouraging people to join the CF for an annual fee of £10. He explained that the more members they have strengthens their voice as they work to make Stortford a good place to live, work and 'be'.

Their summer 2022 newsletter is available in hard copy and on line at [www.stortfordcf.org.uk](http://www.stortfordcf.org.uk).

With all the changes that are going on in our town, it was useful to learn more about this organisation and the work that it does.



**STORT VALLEY ROTARY IS CONCERNED ABOUT LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS AND SUPPORTS THOSE WHO CHALLENGE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST**

## CHARLIE IRELAND ON DIDDLY SQUAT FARM



Gordon introduced Charlie Ireland, a managing partner of Ceres Rural, an advisory farming service established two years ago.

However, he will be known to many as Cheerful Charlie a participant in Jeremy

Clarkson's farming programme on television about life on Diddly Squat Farm. He began by describing how strange it was that he and Jeremy would be sitting down discussing the work as they would normally do, but, in this case surrounded by cameramen and producers!

He went on to explaining that how Jeremy came to be involved in making the programme. He had bought a farm in the Cotswolds in 2009 which was run by a manager but when in 2019 the manager retired, Jeremy decided to run the farm himself. He had been commissioned by Amazon to produce a series for television and decided on Diddly Squat Farm as his subject.

The farm consists of over 1,000 acres, of which 240 acres are of wildflower meadows



established about 45 years ago. The meadows are 'combed' by a special machine at the end of summer and the seeds collected and sold in the

shop.

600 acres are sown with traditional crops of wheat, oil seed rape and barley. the grains are ground at a local mill and sold as flour in the shop and some made into sour dough bread which sell for £8.00 a loaf!

The farm also has 130 sheep which make up a flock with 100 from a neighbouring farm. The meat from the sheep is sold in the shop and 'flies off the shelves!'

The Farm Shop has been a very successful venture. It employs about 20 people and has about 6 to 8,000 visitors a day. Jeremy's efforts to expand both the car park and to develop a cafe/restaurant have been thwarted by the planning authorities and have made a few headlines in the papers. Charlie was keen to point out that the cafe would have provided good, unsophisticated food aimed at the general population - not gourmet cuisine.

The first-year series covering a year on the farm showed profits of £144! The next one to be shown in January 2023 will reveal increased profit.

Jeremy gets on well with the president of the NFU and he and Charlie have been down to talk to the House of Lords. Jeremy's concern is that he wants a level playing field for farming, and challenges trade deals where agriculture is pushed to the back of the queue. He has a desire to improve the life of the average farmer.



During the questions at the end of the talk, there was a discussion on the government's policy of rewilding. Wild flower meadows evidently deplete the ground of potash and other ingredients, resulting in reduced fertility of the soil thus making them unsuitable to support crops, so this needs to be taken into account. On the other side of the argument, Charlie outlined the benefits of rewilding, on the land and on the condition of the runoff water and the rivers. Thus pointing out there are two sides to every coin.

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY IS INTERESTED IN SERIOUS  
MESSAGES PROMOTED VIA POPULAR MEDIA**

## SUMMER PICNIC BBQ AT GORDON & MARY MORRISON'S



Club members and guests from neighbouring Rotary Clubs enjoyed a summer picnic and barbeque in President Gordon & Mary Morrison's beautiful garden. It was a hot day, just prior to the two days of record temperatures in July but in the cool shade of the stately trees, conditions were perfect. The occasion also allowed us again to engage freely, blessedly relieved of Covid-19 restrictions and protocols. It was a convivial and uplifting occasion and all appreciated the generosity of Gordon and Mary hosting the event.





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## FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

Tuesday 13 September  
Monday 19 September  
Tuesday 27 September

Club Evening  
President Gordon Morrison's Dinner Hanbury Manor  
Richard Roberts, HCC - What life is like as Leader of Hertfordshire  
County Council

Tuesday 11 October  
Tuesday 25 October  
Tuesday 8 November  
Tuesday 22 November

Club Evening  
Rowan McKellar - Experience at the Olympics  
Club Evening  
Speaker Evening – TBA

NO MEETINGS IN DECEMBER

[www.stortvalleyrotary.com](http://www.stortvalleyrotary.com)



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