

# STORT VALLEY ROTARY

## NEWSLETTER

February 2024



**QUIZ NIGHT**  
**FRIDAY 15th March**  
**7-00pm for 7.30pm**  
**At the Charis Centre**



### PRESIDENT'S PREAMBLE



Fellow Rotarians and Friends,

Stort Valley Rotary sends you our best wishes for 2024 a year during which we are anticipating even more good news from our Club.

In 2023 we had what can best be described as a spectacular year! We have recruited many new members with us now approaching 40 and our Helping Herts Charity has raised over £300,000 which will help improve the lives of children and young people across Hertfordshire. Last week Jim Tatchell, myself and the Helping Herts team (pictured below) met with the charities that we are supporting and handed out the funds that we raised during 2023. We also heard first-hand what a positive impact we are having.

As you will have read in previous and current editions of this newsletter we held many events during 2023 and have supported many local causes. At the end of 2023 we were also able to help buy Christmas presents for children from Ukraine.

This year has commenced with Haggis and Bag Pipes when we held the Stort Valley Rotary Burns' Supper at Bishop's Stortford Golf Club with

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- Fashion Show - Helping Herts
- Burns Supper in pictures – BS Golf Club
- Charity Walk – Helping Herts
- Are we all racist? - Fiona Clarke

60 members and friends. During the evening we heard some great speeches along with our Club Members sharing with us their favourite Burns' poems. (pictured Gordon Morrison & Jim Tatchell with Julie Marson MP).

The more members we have the more we will be able to do to help good causes so please register your interest in Stort Valley Rotary.

Kind regards,  
 Gordon Morrison,  
 President



Find us at:  
[stortvalleyrotary.com](http://stortvalleyrotary.com)

## SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT IN KENYA

Hilary Ochieng Odira of ACSIL Consulting Ltd addressed us on sustainable investment opportunities in Migori County Kenya. Hilary is in the UK to showcase investment opportunities in Migori and show how they can benefit future generations of local inhabitants, particularly females and the young.



Migori County is one of 47 counties in Kenya and was established in 2010 when the administration of Kenya was reorganised. It lies in the southwest of the country on Lake Victoria bordering Tanzania. It has a population of about 1.2 million with a youthful, well-educated and friendly population. It has a good climate and good air and road connections. It has gold and other precious metal deposits and lies in a sugar belt. There is also a local University. The picture is of the Migori County Assembly



It offers strategic advantages for investment with tax incentives from central and local government. The country is relatively stable in both political and economic terms with supportive laws to promote growth. Women are encouraged to become educated and add greatly to the enthusiasm of the workforce. Migori County has access to raw materials and its location offers the ability to generate cross border revenues. As a result a high rate of return can be achieved on capital invested. Examples of the type of development opportunities are:

- Holiday parks ,lodges and hotels
- Sugar milling
- Organic farming
- Fresh water fishing
- Renewable energy
- Affordable housing
- Mining and processing plants.

However, this also bring IMPACT to young hearts.

New investment is a major way to benefit children and young people. The employment it brings creates an uplift in general living standards and regular meals on the table. It increases funds available for education and health services. The rewards are practical learning opportunities, better recreational and health care and greater life expectancy. Thus children have better social mobility and improved life chances.

In conclusion, Hilary observed that Kenya and the UK have a long historic partnership. This is mutually beneficial for trading and social relations. New investment will help enormously local families and children enjoy better life opportunities. For the investor there are many worthwhile and rewarding significant prospects.

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY APPRECIATES THE FUTURE  
SIGNIFICANCE TO US ALL OF EVENTS IN AFRICA**

## HELPING HERTS STANDING UP FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Helping Herts, the official charity for the Stort Valley Rotary Club, has had a fantastic year working with independent boutiques, stylists and charities across the county promoting sustainable fashion, whilst raising money for its partner charities, who are all dedicated to improving child welfare in Hertfordshire.

In the last 12 months Helping Herts has organised a series of sustainable fashion shows in Hertford, Hitchin, Bishops Stortford, Cheshunt and Harpenden in collaboration with local businesses including: Mint of Hertford; Hitchin's Brick Lane; Lou's Pre-Loved Boutique, Dobson's Home and the Friends Dress Agency.

Sustainable fashion is all about making choices that are better for the environment and creating fashion that lasts and can be worn for years to come. It can be hard to know where to start when it comes to sustainable fashion, which is why we decided to bring together local fashion experts to offer advice, and show people just how stylish and beautiful pre-loved clothes can be.

All the fashion shows were sell-out successes, helping spread the word about sustainable fashion and raising money for children's charities in Hertfordshire. An impressive £16,000 has been raised through the events this year, and we were able to match fund a number of these events. Helping Herts has smashed its fund-raising target for 2023, having raised £340,000 this year. All of the money raised will go to the partner charities to help them continue the invaluable work they do to support children in Hertfordshire (See impact statements at the end).

If you're reading this and thinking "how can I get involved" please come and talk to us. From organising fashion shows, corporate fundraisers, sponsorship of our events, or branding on our website, we really welcome support from local businesses to help us in our efforts to improve child welfare in Herts and influence where Helping Herts is going.

For more information, please visit [www.helpingherts.co.uk](http://www.helpingherts.co.uk) or contact Helping Herts Manager, Clare Burgess: [clare@helpingherts.com](mailto:clare@helpingherts.com)

### ABOUT HELPING HERTS

Helping Herts is a countywide campaign, with the backing of Stort Valley Rotary Club, set up to support good causes after the Covid-19 pandemic, when many charities were struggling to survive.



Helping Herts improves the lives of children across Hertfordshire, from when they are still in the womb through to young adulthood. The 2023 beneficiary charities are: Chexs, Coram Life Education, Herts Young Homeless, For Baby's Sake, Herts Mind Network, Grove Cottage, Home-Start Herts, Keech Hospice Care, Phoenix Group for Deaf Children & Adults, PlaySkill, the Ollie Foundation and the NSPCC.

### IMPACT STATEMENT FROM PARTNER CHARITIES

"We will use some of the funding to provide face to face one-to-one support to children and young people in the community with a wide range of mental health needs."

#### **Mind Hertfordshire Network**

"We have recruited an experienced educator now dedicated to Hertfordshire for one day a week to support all our schools and to make

the most of on-line teaching resources that support children's mental and physical wellbeing."

#### **Coram Life Education**

"Helping Herts generous contribution enable us to continue our work providing life-saving training and support to communities in need."

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY APPLAUDS ALL EFFORTS  
TO MAKE FASHION MORE SUSTAINABLE**

## TAKE ON A HELPING HERTS CHALLENGE IN 2024

Helping Herts brings together remarkable charities united by a common goal – to improve the lives of children and young people in Hertfordshire.

Helping Herts is the official charity of Stort Valley Rotary. Last year Helping Herts raised over £300,000 - a result of generous donations and match funding.

The 12 charities set to benefit from the 2024 campaign are:

- Coram Life Education
- Chexs
- For Baby's Sake
- Herts Young Homeless
- Homestart Hertfordshire
- Keech Hospice Care
- Mind Hertfordshire Network
- Space
- Grove Cottage
- Playskill
- The Ollie Foundation
- The Phoenix group

If you're looking for a challenge in 2024, Helping Herts has an exciting programme of events lined up to whet your appetite!

Look out for:



Charity walks in the stunning Hertfordshire countryside – Gordon Morrison and Jim Tatchell, Helping Herts founders, are walking 12 loops of the Hertfordshire Way in April. Save the date for the Great Big Walk for Herts on 28 September!

Sustainable fashion events with independent boutiques, promoting sustainable fashion.

Helping Herts Week - 1st – 5th July. An annual event celebrating everything good about Hertfordshire; from the charities that support our communities, to great days out, and the heroes in our community.



Free Activity Guide - if you're looking for activities to keep you and your family entertained, download the free activity guide: <https://www.helpingherts.com/helping-herts-activity-guidebook/>

Organise your own fundraiser – arrange your own charity walk or event to raise money for Helping Herts. Hertfordshire Walker has a collection of free walks which you can download and follow on your mobile.

Join Stort Valley Rotary - it's an exciting time to be part of the Rotary, as not only do you get all the benefits of being a Rotarian, such as developing your business network and making new friends, you'll also have the opportunity to be part of Helping Herts and make a real impact on the children's charities, which is very rewarding.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.helpingherts.com>

<https://stortvalleyrotary.com>

Contact: [Clare@helpingherts.com](mailto:Clare@helpingherts.com)

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY AIMS TO IMPROVE THE LIFE PROSPECTS  
OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE GREATEST NEED**



## INFORMAL WARM UP FOR CHRISTMAS



Pearce's Farm Shop Restaurant. The food was excellent, many choosing anything but turkey, and the company was even better. We all left the event in cheerful mood and ready to meet the excesses of the Christmas Season.



Although our Rotary Club does not meet formally during December, we did manage to sneak in an informal lunch before Christmas. Gwenda Deal, our menu coordinator, was persuaded to arrange the get-together at

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## FIRST CLUB MEETING OF 2024 OPENED WITH A GENTLE QUIZ



Our first Rotary Club meeting of 2024 was a

gentle introduction to the new year. Business was swiftly dealt with as the main event was a Quiz organised by Derek Crowther. Derek is known for his interest in quizzes but even for him this one was unusual – even eccentric. The possibility, deliberately intended, for misunderstanding the question made for much hilarity which some exploited to the full! It is impossible to say which team won but some knowledge was picked up and the laughter cheered up everyone.

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## BURNS' SUPPER



The Stort Valley Rotary Burns' Supper held at the Bishop's Stortford Golf Club and attended by 60 members and friends, can only be described as a barnstorming success - nothing like a dose of Scottish flummery to cheer us up in a world that is dark both physically and in the wider sense. The event was organised by club member Jenny Florides and President Gordon Morrison was in the chair. Many arrived for the pre-

meal reception in full Scottish dress while others dressed with a more modest nod to the Bard. Even before the introductory drink was consumed, it was clear that everyone was determined to enjoy the evening and Gordon had difficulty persuading guests to break off conversations and take their places at table. Order having been restored and essential messages conveyed, the Selkirk Grace was said. Starters were served and those determined to celebrate in true Burns fashion, of course took the Scotch Broth.

Piper Dixie Ingram piped in the steaming Haggis, ushering it to all corners of the room. Suitably displayed and witnessed, Dixie then addressed the haggis with passion before gleefully plunging his blade to release its gushing entrails. Those with strong stomachs enjoyed a satisfying plate of haggis, neeps and tatties while others settled for more modest fare on offer. Dessert followed.

A selection of Burns' poems were read which were not always easy for Sassenachs to understand, but some were getting the hang of it having heard the unique poems read many times before. One poem understood by most, and particularly Mary Morrison, was the poem to Mary, read with evident feeling by President and chairman for the night, Gordon Morrison.

Then followed the speeches, first being The Immortal Memory delivered by Alasdair Douglas. It was amusing and informative emphasising the particular social and political

backdrop to the life and poetry of Burns. Our own Jim Tachell delivered the Toast to the Lassies and for those brought up south of the border, what it may have lacked in Scottish fervour, it gained in understandable enunciation. Julie Marson MP replied to the Toast to the Lassies and was able to show a lighter maybe even frivolous expression away from shenanigans of the Houses of Parliament.

Then followed a further recital of Burns poems and a traditional selection by Dixie on the pipes. The formal part of the evening was brought to a close by the singing of Auld Lang Syne – properly of course open joined hands at the beginning and cross hands only for the last verse.

Conversation continued for some time until it became obviously time to depart by the noisy clearing away of the tables by the kitchen staff. We left lifted and ready to face the new year with cheerfulness and optimism!















**STORT VALLEY ROTARY KNOWS HOW TO CELEBRATE  
A SPECIAL OCCASION**



## HELPING HERTS'S 12 MILES FOR 12 CHARITIES CHALLENGE



Lace up your walking boots this February and take on Helping Herts' 12 miles for 12 charities challenge – walk 12 miles in the beautiful Hertfordshire countryside to support twelve remarkable children's charities in Herts.



This challenge is not your ordinary stroll; it's a meaningful 12-mile journey undertaken at your own pace, whenever it suits you throughout February. Beyond the physical activity, this initiative is about making a difference and creating a positive impact in the lives of children who need our support.

Walking is not only an excellent form of exercise, but it's also an opportunity to clear your mind, connect with nature, and support a good cause. By participating in the 12 Miles

for 12 Charities challenge, you're not only improving your health but also bringing crucial support to children across Hertfordshire.

Gordon Morrison, Founder of Helping Herts, said: "This challenge is a collective effort to create positive change in the lives of children in Hertfordshire. Each step contributes to a meaningful difference."

Getting involved is easy. Simply sign up at [www.helpingherts.com](http://www.helpingherts.com), create your fundraising page, and start planning your walk. Whether you prefer a brisk morning walk, a leisurely weekend stroll, or even a run, every step counts. You can choose to go solo or make it a group activity with friends, family, or colleagues.

Share your walking journey on social media to inspire others and garner additional support. Every photo, every mile, and every donation contribute to making a significant impact. For more information and to sign up, visit <https://www.helpingherts.com/2024/01/09/february-challenge-12-miles-for-12-charities/>. The photo below is of Jim Tatchell and Gordon Morrison, founders of Helping Herts pictured with Alastair Hill, Helping Herts Supporter.



**STORT VALLEY ROTARY ENCOURAGES HEALTHY OUTDOOR  
ACTIVITY WHILE SUPPORTING GOOD CAUSES**



## IS RACISM AN ISSUE IN THE UK? WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?



Gordon welcomed Fiona Clarke to the meeting. Fiona currently advises companies on how to deal with their corporate social responsibilities, including ensuring racial equality. Her interest in the topic of race began in her student days. The George Floyd incident in the US galvanised her to get involved.

She lived for two years in Africa working in the charity sector and then married an Ethiopian national. They now live in Bishops Stortford.

It was interesting to be told, as background to her talk, that Africa was the cradle of civilisation right up to the 13th Century. It was wealthy, cultural and it traded with many nations. Our common ancestors were dark-skinned not white. Our skins paled over the generations as we migrated further northwards. Africans were first recorded as racially inferior in the 14th Century. At the behest of his King, a Portuguese merchant wrote a treatise in order to justify the Portuguese capture of African natives to use as slaves. The Catholic Church also sanctioned the trade in slaves, finding justification in a singular entry in the Bible's Old Testament for this view. Over the centuries Governments and academics have compounded the falsehood by some very dubious studies and research showing the dark-skinned races are biologically inferior. Hitler used the notion of biological inferiority to justify the Holocaust. With this theory discredited, the bias against

the coloured nations, notably Africans, is now being perpetuated on the basis of their alleged cultural inferiority.

Fiona concluded that white nations clearly carry lots of ingrained negative baggage on this topic.

She continued, that with the advent of TV and universal news coverage, especially in the US, it is evident that colour bias existed and still persists to this day. However it has become socially unacceptable to admit to having any racial prejudice.

Fiona believes that although we now claim that colour is not an issue and we discount it in our attitudes and decisions, it remains in us and we suffer from "colour blind racism" and this too needs to be identified and "called out".

She cites a litany of areas where the statistics prove that black people still suffer due to their skin colour. Black students suffer more school exclusions; they are marked down in class exams; they suffer lower predictions in A level results than they actually achieve impacting their choice of University; they suffer bias when they get there; the mere foreign sound of their names disadvantages them; they are more likely to be stopped and searched by the police; there are more unemployed black people in percentage terms; they receive less medication for pain: more black people died during Covid: more black people have problems in child-birth.



Fiona quoted incidents in her own experience where her husband's employment prospects and access to services brought negative responses clearly due to his colour; the latter with potentially serious consequences. Despite excellent academic qualifications he

could only obtain work in a kitchen, which brought its own problems. Her husband's friends have all been stopped by the police who she believes have a presumption that black people are more likely to be criminals and act accordingly. About to have a baby, she is apprehensive about the incipient bias against colour that it might have to endure.

She believes white people, whilst acknowledging colour prejudice still exists, consider it is down to a few individuals and isolated incidents. They do not understand how the coloured person suffers day-to-day with enduring white negative attitudes.

The white person believes they are non-racist, educated, open minded, nice, whilst coloured people are racist, ignorant, prejudiced and mean.

This attitude (called white fragility) Fiona believes militates against us having a proper dialogue with each other about residual racism and how to deal with it. We positively resist attempts to engage on the topic. Fiona believes that each one of us has had, on occasion, colour bias. How do we whites deal it and make things better for all?

She recommends the following to better understand racism. We should read, view podcasts, learn all about anti-racism, reflect on our own racism, practice reacting without white fragility, call ourselves out over our own racism and any we meet. Diversify the stories we read, the films we watch and the people we associate with.

Additionally, we can ensure that proportional representation applies on Boards of

Governors and the like, make recruitment processes anonymous, attend protests and demand racial equality, sign petitions, call someone out when they say something racist and report it. We should buy grandchildren books on race and talk about it. We must be more positive in supporting our coloured friends and colleagues as well as many other things.

Fiona closed by inviting questions on a topic on which she clearly invests 100% of her own energies, informed as they are by her personal experiences.

President Gordon Morrison perhaps summarised best the reaction of the members attending. "Fiona, you have shocked us all, nobody on this zoom talk will believe that they are racist but you are challenging us to consider that perhaps we are and that we should do something about it".

More on this along with members thoughts can be seen on YouTube via Club's website:-

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



**STORT VALLEY ROTARY BELIEVES IT SHOULD CONSTANTLY SEEK TO UNDERSTAND AND SO ADVANCE ITS INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHERS**

## FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

Tuesday 13 February	<u>Professor Sam Lundrigan</u> - Professor of Investigative Psychology and Public Protection and Director of the Policing Institute for the Eastern Region (PIER) at Anglia Ruskin University - public protection and the prevention of sexual violence.
Tuesday 12 March	<u>Greg Camburn</u> - CEO of Retune Charity Limited for mental wellbeing - creative outlets to help with mental wellbeing, especially in Schools with year 5 pupils (9 to 10 year olds).
Tuesday 9 April	<u>Alan Hillier</u> and <u>Pauline Craven</u> from UKAid and <u>Kate Turner</u> from The Bish magazine.
Tuesday 14 May	<u>Simon Marlow</u> - An ex police officer and now an Adult Social Prescriber attached to our GP surgeries.
Tuesday 11 June	A.G.M.
Tuesday 9 July	<u>Ed Anthony</u> - Child Mental Health Social Prescriber attached to our GP surgeries.
	<b>August no formal meeting</b>
Tuesday 10 Sept	<u>Matt Roper</u> of the Baptist Centre to speak on MENINADANCA a children's charity. bringing hope, changing lives. stopping female sexual exploitation and trafficking of children in Brazil.

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

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Stort Valley

STORT VALLEY ROTARY CLUB

# QUIZ NIGHT

FRIDAY 15th March 7-00pm for 7.30pm

Charis Centre

Water Lane Bishop's Stortford



In support of

**BISHOP'S STORTFORD FOOD BANK &  
THE HOLY TRINITY WINTER NIGHT SHELTER**

Tables of eight, Raffle,  
Ploughmans Supper supplied by Just Add Parsley  
Bring your own drinks Tickets £15

To book your table and for more information contact  
Derek Crowther on 01279 832580 or  
Email: [john.crowther2@ntlworld.com](mailto:john.crowther2@ntlworld.com)

