

The long arm of The Rotary Foundation – or 45 years on

Contributed by PDG Ron Lucas

I have written on these pages before about our District's Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar 1977-78, Miss Susan Hardman, born and raised in the Westlands, Newcastle under Lyme, and educated at the Orme Girls School, now of course part of Newcastle under Lyme School. Susan came from a Methodist family who worshipped at St Peter's Methodist Church, in Pilkington Avenue, Newcastle, and I believe our SVP Marion Reddish was one of the church leaders who influenced Susan in her early church life. Susan was sponsored by our club, and I served as her sponsor counsellor during her ambassadorial year at Yale University after her undergraduate years at Cambridge. Now the Rev'd Professor Susan Hardman-Moore MA PhD FRHistS who is retiring shortly as Principal of New College of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, founded in 1846, and ranked in the world's top 20 universities for studies in Theology and Religious Studies. Susan has been Principal of New College since 2018 following in the footsteps of distinguished principals since 1846. She was formerly Professor of Early Modern Religion and Director of Postgraduate Studies.

Susan is a world authority on the Pilgrim Fathers and author of one of the greatest books to be written on the Mayflower settlers "Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home" (2007). The book was joint runner up for the 2008 Longmans-History Today Book of the Year Award. She regularly broadcasts on this subject on both TV and radio including the "Today" programme and "In Our Time".

On 8th February this year our speaker was Carolyn Lawrence wife of the Market Drayton Methodist Minister since September 2021, the Revd Mark Lawrence. Carolyn served as Vice-President of the Methodist Conference from June 2020-21. She chose as her subject 'From the Mayflower to Market Drayton' as one of her ancestors was on the Mayflower as it sailed to New England in 1620. Afterwards I asked Carolyn if she had seen Susan's book on the Pilgrims which she had not. I still keep in touch with Susan but not as frequently as I should, I suppose. However, I emailed Susan in Edinburgh, explaining my request, and I was delighted that Susan kindly sent a copy of her book to Carolyn with a lovely accompanying note which was a joy for Carolyn to receive – the long arm of the Rotary Foundation – some 45 years on. And some 45 years on I was delighted that Susan's life enriching year as an Ambassadorial Scholar in the USA as long ago as 1977-78 is still having an impact on her, and I quote from an email she sent me in February.....

"With retirement coming up, it's inevitable that I mull over the path my career has taken. The Rotary award changed my life, for sure! I am indebted to Rotary for the wonderful opportunity I was given. to go to Yale Divinity School. I am still in close touch with my Rotary hosts over there. Len Spear died a good few years ago, but in 2019 I flew to Connecticut as a surprise for the 90th birthday of his widow Harriet. Covid permitting, we are planning a holiday with Harriet and her daughters Robin and Gayle and their families. Gayle has two sons in their mid-20s who are autistic, like our son Rannoch - we make up an extended family support network, which is so lovely. We know we owe this to Len's activities as a Rotarian and to my Rotary award!"

Such is the long arm of The Rotary Foundation – some 45 years on.