

How the Rotary Club of Newcastle-under-Lyme was established

The Rotary Club of Newcastle-under-Lyme was organised on the 1st March 1929, its Founder Members were elected to membership on the 9th April 1929, it was elected to membership of Rotary International on 25th of May 1929 and it received its Charter on the 13th September 1929. Its number on the roll of Rotary International is 3152 and on that of Rotary International of Great Britain and Ireland 317, and it is a member of No. 6 District.

The first move for the formation of a Rotary Club for Newcastle-under-Lyme was made in October 1928 at a preliminary meeting in Burkart's Café. This meeting had the advice and counsel of Rotarian A. E. Gray the President at that time of the Rotary Club of Stoke-on-Trent. It was resolved at that meeting that a Rotary Club be formed. Harold W. Whitfield was appointed Interim President, R. P. Astley Interim Secretary and G. Lamb More Interim Treasurer. For various reasons the actual formation was delayed but the Interim President was determined to carry on with the project and he called a further meeting in The Guildhall, Newcastle-under-Lyme, early in 1929. At this meeting seventeen gentlemen agreed to become founder members of the New Rotary Club. To the regret of all one of these, the Rev. Father d. Kelly who had shown keen interests from the first meeting, for reasons not within his control had to retire.

Rotarian John Crabtree, the then Chairman of No. 6 District and Rotarian Hugh E. Folks, the Vice-Chairman of No. 6 District, met the Interim President and the Interim Secretary and as a result the Inaugural Meeting of The Rotary Club of Newcastle-under-Lyme was convened by Rotarian H. E. Folks in the Castle Hotel, Newcastle-under-Lyme for 1.00pm on Friday 1st March 1929. Rotarian H. E. Folks presided in the absence of the District Chairman who was indisposed. The following visiting Rotarians were present:

C. A. Smith of Birmingham
Tom Warren & John Nicholls of Wolverhampton
J. H. Walker & A. Wickham of West Bromwich
D. H. Bates & T. Hartley of Stoke-on-Trent

A telegram was received from the President of the Rotary Club of Smethwick sending Greetings and Good Wishes. Rotarian H. E. Folks offered a hearty welcome to the visitors and to the Founder Members of the Rotary Club of Newcastle-under-Lyme and wished the enterprise every success. He felt that a good start had been made and that a Rotary Club in Newcastle-under-Lyme would soon be established and would obtain a flourishing condition. Rotarian C. A. Smith of the Rotary Club of Birmingham gave an admiral address on the Aims and Objects of Rotary. He emphasised that it was the putting into not the taking out of Rotary that made for the success and usefulness of the movement. He dealt fully with the principles of Rotary as applied to the individual member, to the club, to the local community, to the Country, to its International aspect and emphatically stated that nothing but good could emanate from the movement so long as the real principals of Rotary were originally adhered to.

Rotarian T. A. Warren of Wolverhampton contributed a magnificent address full of interest and real helpfulness. A very hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman, to the Rotarians who addressed the meeting and to the other Rotarian visitors, was moved by Rotarian Rev. L. J. Baggott and seconded by Rotarian T. Stinton, both of whom expressed the pleasure they had experienced as members of Rotary Clubs in other parts of the country. The vote of thanks was cordially received and at the request of the Chairman fitting acknowledgement was made by Rotarian J. H. Walker President of the Rotary Club of West Bromwich.

At the next meeting of the Club Rotarian Rev. L. J. Baggott was elected Vice-President, Rotarian R. Holden was appointed Honorary Treasurer as Rotarian G. Lamb had died suddenly while away on holiday. The Entrance Fee was fixed at two guineas and the Annual Subscription at two guineas.

Application for Membership in Rotary International

On the 10th May 1929 application for membership in Rotary International was made as follows: The Rotary Club of Newcastle-under-Lyme hereby makes application for membership of Rotary International in accordance with the provisions of Article IV of the Constitution. The Rotary Club of Newcastle-under-Lyme was organised on the 1st March 1929 by Rotary International Association for Great Britain and Ireland and at the time of making this application has sixteen Charter Members of whom a list is provided with this application. Regular weekly meetings are held each Friday at the Castle Hotel, Newcastle-under-Lyme at 1-5pm.

The application was acknowledged by Rotarian Fred C. Hickson, Executive Secretary of R.I.B.I. on 14th May 1929. On the 25th May 1929, he notified the Club that the application for Membership of Rotary International had been duly approved by the Board of Directors of the Association, and that on its confirmation by the Board of Directors of Rotary International, the Club would receive a Charter of Membership presented by the District Chairman.

The Charter was presented on the 13th September 1929 at a Luncheon held in the Council Chamber, Municipal Hall, Newcastle-under-Lyme. It was a great occasion and our Rotary Foundation Stone was well and truly laid. The outstanding features of that great day were the eloquent address of Rotarian Tom Warren, Chairman of No. 6 District in presenting the Charter, the very fine response of the Founder president Harold W. Whitfield, the magnificent speech of the Rector Rotarian L. J. Baggott proposing Rotary International and the very evident enjoyment and delight of all who attended the Charter Meeting. The Rotary Club of Newcastle-under-Lyme was well and truly launched.

What has it accomplished?

Quoting from the first annual report submitted by the Founder Secretary Rotarian R. P. Astley which covered the period from the 1st March 1929 to the 30th June 1930, it appears that 61 meetings had been held in the Club's first period of existence. Out of these meetings on three occasions only had the ordained speaker failed to appear through unavoidable circumstances. On two of these occasions the Vice President Rev. L. J. Baggott filled the bill and the other was occupied by Rotarian John B. Vernon at a moment's notice. All speakers most willingly accepted the Club's invitation and all of them thoroughly enjoyed our fellowship. The membership had grown from 16 on the 1st March 1929 to 43 on the 30th June 1930, of these 16 were Founder Members, 25 ordinary members, one Associate member and one Honorary Member.

Inter-club visits were made to the Rotary Clubs of Stoke-on-Trent and Macclesfield and members from these Clubs visited Newcastle.

Quote from the Secretary's first report "our first 15 months draws to its close. Rotary in Newcastle-under-Lyme had a beginning not too sure of itself but by the kindness of Rotarians of experience we found our feet. Such success as we have attained is largely due to kindness. With united effort and goodwill our Rotary Flag shall brave all the breezes that blow, it stands for better things for the world, for a dauntless courage and a high fortitude in all crises of life, for linking up of all mankind without distinction of race or colour in the universal tie of a common brotherhood and fellowship. It began in the heart of Paul Harris in 1905.

J. R. Legge
25th May 1950