

History
of the
Rotary Club of Burslem
1956 - 1977

by

Norman M. Stowe

Past President

History—Rotary Club of Burslem

Introduction.

The Rotary Club of Burslem was born under the Leverton Plan and sponsored by the Rotary Club of Stoke-on-Trent. The purpose of the Plan was to enable large Clubs such as Stoke-on-Trent to create Daughter Clubs, thus enabling others to join in with Rotary work.

On the 2nd September, 1955, the District Extension Officer, Rotarian J. Bowman and Rotarian C. Bellamy (Extension Officer, Stoke) contacted Arthur Tennant, the Manager of District Bank, Burslem and several other business and professional men of Burslem. After several informal meetings it was agreed that there was sufficient interest to justify the establishment of a Rotary Club in Burslem.

On the 12th October, 1955 the following "Gentlemen of Burslem" (our first title) were showing keen interest: H. Jones, R.C.H. Walton, R.K. Bailey, F. Askey, E.J. Sadler, H. Walker, T. Holdcroft, F. Walton, A. Cliff, H. Briggs, J. Westlake, W.M. Ledingham and N.M. Stowe.

T. Holdcroft
Russell
A. S. Tennant
H. Harold Jones
Nancy Briggs
Harold C Walker
John West
Harold Whalley
Asker
Harstone

The first resolution passed by the Provisional Formation Committee was as follows:

We, the undersigned, professional and business men, actively engaged in our daily vocations in Burslem, and being of the opinion that a member club of Rotary International should, and could, be formed to operate in that area, agree as follows:

- 1. That we, having received instructions with regard to the objects of Rotary and the responsibilities of membership of a Rotary Club, are prepared to render such service as lies within our power towards the formation of such a Club.*
- 2. That we further agree to meet together regularly with such Rotarians as may be appointed by the District Extension Officer of the R.I.B.I. District Council No. 6 and constitute ourselves as a Provisional Formation Committee, and that our methods of procedure shall be those prescribed for Provisional Formation Committee's.*
- 3. That although we believe ourselves to be eligible for founder membership of the suggested Club, we recognise that our becoming actively associated with this Provisional Formation Committee does not establish for us, individually or collectively, any right, privilege or claim on Rotary International or its components with regard to membership in Rotary nor does it constitute any claim on Rotary International that a Club will be formed in the area above named, should the duly appointed authorities of Rotary International decide otherwise.*
- 4. The title of such Provisional Formation Committee shall be as follows: **ROTARY CLUB FOR BURSLEM.***

Meetings continued weekly on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. at the Leopard Hotel, Market Place, Burslem, and during this period, guidance and instruction were generously given by visiting prominent Rotarians.

Marshall W. Ledingham occupied the Chair during these early meetings and Reg Bailey acted as Secretary.

It was eventually arranged that the Club should be officially inaugurated as from 24th January, 1956. This took the form of a Dinner at the North Stafford Hotel attended by Eric Skinner, District Chairman 106, Rotarians E.H. Richards; George Daley, District Secretary; E.O. Bowman, Extension Officer and C. Bellamy, together with 200 Rotarians from Clubs throughout the District. The following 25 were elected as founder members of the Rotary Club of Burslem:

Frank Askey
Reg Bailey
Arthur L. Barker
Harry Briggs
Len Cliff
Arthur Cliff
Bill Davies
Reg Hammersley
Bob Hilton
Tom Holdcroft
Leslie Hoyle
Harold Jones
Marshall Ledington

Alf Riley
Ed Sadler
Reg Smart
Arthur Smith
Norman Stowe
Arthur Tennant
Cecil Walton
Frank Walton
Harold Walker
John Westlake
Harold Whalley
Paul Wood

During the months that followed, the Club became very much endeared to 'John' as he was affectionately known, Bowman, Extension Officer 106 and member of the Malvern Club. It must be recorded that he put trojan work into our foundation and saw to it that Burslem came into Rotary well equipped in knowledge and enthusiasm to carry out the tasks demanded by the movement.

On the 17th May, 1956, President A.Z. Baker, Rotary International, sent a letter of congratulations to President W.M. Ledingham and Secretary Norman Stowe in which he said 'your Committee will learn to appreciate Rotary as your Club develops Rotarians and encourages them to put Rotary to work where they work, and live Rotary in their community and in their relations with people of other lands'. The following is a complete copy of the letter from President A.Z. Baker:

W.M. Ledingham, President,
The Rotary Club.

N.M. Stowe, Esq.,
Honorary Secretary,
The Rotary Club, Burslem,
Staffs.,
England.

Dear Fellow Rotarians,

It is a pleasure to welcome your Club to membership in Rotary International and to congratulate you upon your election as its first officers.

Your Club joins an ever growing family of Clubs, now numbering more than 9,000 in 98 countries and geographical regions around the world and you join me as fellow officers in this, the first year of Rotary's second half-century.

Your community will learn to appreciate Rotary as your Club develops Rotarians, and encourages them to put Rotary to work where they work, and to live Rotary in their community, and in their relations with people of other lands.

You have a great responsibility as Officers of your Club, but a greater opportunity to make your community a better place in which to live and engage in business or profession, and to help create and maintain the essentials of peace in your part of the world.

May I assure you of my highest hopes and best wishes for the success of your Club and the satisfaction of your service.

Sincerely,

A.Z. BAKER,
President.

Due purely to a misunderstanding, a very sad chapter occurred when the Club was refused its charter by the District Chairman, E. Skinner. A quote from a letter dated 23rd May, 1956 to Secretary N.M. Stowe is as follows: 'I do not think that I am justified in handing them their charter until they realise that Rotary has claims as well as privileges'. The complete text of the letter is shown below:

N.M. Stowe,
12 Owen Road,
Burslem,
Stoke-on-Trent.

25.5.56

Dear Mr. Stowe,

Re: Charter Meeting.

I have now heard from the District Chairman regarding the above, but I am sorry to inform you that owing to Burslem not being represented at any District Council meeting since the Inaugural meeting, the Chairman refuses to present the charter.

I quote from his letter 'I do not think I am justified in handing them their charter until they realise that Rotary has claims as well as privileges'.

The District Chairman has the last word in matters of this kind, therefore there is nothing I can do. Naturally I feel most disappointed after all the work that has been put in and all the miles I have travelled.

However, I am bound to admit that the Chairman is right and until the Club does take its responsibilities seriously there is little I can do.

The next District meeting is, of course, the 30th June, District Assembly at Malvern, when, providing Burslem is represented, a date can possibly be fixed.

Yours sincerely,

E.O. BOWMAN.

As would be expected, this caused a considerable amount of dissention amongst the members of the Club and had it not been for the patience and understanding of President W. Marshall Ledingham, it is very doubtful if the Club would have continued.

Eventually, however, the matter was cleared up and the presentation of the charter was belatedly effected by the next District Chairman, W.E. Homer at the North Stafford Hotel on the 24th September, 1956.

Some 220 Rotarians were present and the Club originally set out on the road into 'Service before Self', with

Marshall Ledingham as its first President, Norman M. Stowe, Secretary, R.K. Bailey, Assistant Secretary, A.S. Tennant, Treasurer and A.L.H. Barker, Vice-President.

The following presentations were made to the Club:
The Bell by the Rotary Club of Stoke-on-Trent.
The Lectern by the Rotary Club of Newcastle.
The Wheel by President W.M. Ledingham.

It was a most successful event and the year 1956-57 proceeded normally, experience was gained and fellowship grew in strength. Many visitors came to wish us 'Bon Voyage' at the weekly meetings.

In January, 1957, it was unfortunate that Vice-President A.L. Barker and Rotarian L. Hoyle resigned from the Club due to certain differences of opinion. Again, the patience and ability of the President was responsible for holding the members together. Due to these resignations an election was held and Norman M. Stowe was elected Vice-President, Harry Briggs, Secretary and Arthur Tennant, Treasurer.

Another resignation followed, that of Reg Bailey, who had given yeoman service and his considerable ability was greatly missed. Reg, however, joined the Tunstall Club.

The early years continued satisfactorily until all obligations were enthusiastically fulfilled. The wives of members gave considerable assistance in raising over £200 for the Club Charity Fund.