

**THE ROTARY FOUNDATION DISTRICT 1210  
Shropshire, Staffordshire and West Midlands - England**

**Centenary Alumni Garden Party  
Sunday 22 May 2005 from 2.00pm to 4.30pm  
at  
Chillington Hall, Brewood, Staffordshire**

This event was the brain-child of District 1210 Rotary Foundation Chairman Hilary Ball, and her Scholarships sub-Committee Chairman Ken Rogers, to celebrate 100 years of the Rotary movement, and the life-changing effects of participating in the educational programmes of The Rotary Foundation. For Rotary Foundation Alumnus John Gifford, it was a means of thanking Rotary for such an experience in 1982-83. In that year, John Gifford was a young Police Inspector serving with the Staffordshire Police Force, and he was selected to become a team member of a Group Study Exchange Team to visit District 7770, South Carolina, USA. The team leader was Hilary's husband Jon Ball, later to become District Governor of District 1210. This experience had a profound effect on John Gifford as he learned much about himself and his chosen career during his six-weeks' stay in the USA.

Around six years ago, John inherited Chillington Hall and country estate from his father Peter Gifford. The Gifford family came to England with the Normans in 1178, and Chillington has been in the family since those days. Chillington Hall is a Grade 1 listed building (the highest grade of building of architectural or historic interest in the British Isles). This prestigious country house built in the 18th century is notable for the East and North Ranges designed by Sir John Soane, with grounds designed by "Capability" Brown, arguably the most famous landscape gardener of stately homes England has ever produced. Now Chief Constable of Staffordshire, with his wife Crescent, who was born and raised in Dallas, Texas, John kindly offered his lovely home as the venue for a Centenary Alumni Garden Party on Sunday afternoon, 22 May 2005. It was part of Rotary District 1210 Centenary Celebrations, and this event turned out to be the most significant Alumni event in the British Isles this past centenary year. It was coupled with the Presidents Elect Training Seminar (PETS) Social Afternoon, by the Governor-elect David Williams, and with a jazz band made up of local Rotarians, there was a great atmosphere.

Some 26 Foundation Alumni attended, some travelling from as far as London and Edinburgh, Scotland. It was a great time of fellowship and fun, and over tea and refreshments many happy re-unions were made, and ambassadorial scholars of up to 30 years ago were reunited with their sponsor counsellors, and GSE team members with their team leaders. In presenting his banner and a gift to John and Crescent Gifford, District Governor James Adeogun said "This celebration of 100 years of Rotary and the life-changing experience of The Rotary Foundation Programmes, has come about because of the generosity of our gracious hosts John and Crescent Gifford, and we thank them for so kindly opening up their magnificent home today".

On our leaving Chillington, Crescent Gifford said how much the afternoon had meant to John, as it was his way of simply saying 'thank you' to Rotary and how proud he was to be an alumnus of The Rotary Foundation.

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17 July 2005