

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BURSLEM ROTARY CLUB

HISTORY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF BURSLEM Past President Norman M Stowe

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” (the 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.

Meetings continued weekly on Wednesdays at 1pm at the Leopard Hotel, Market Place, Burslem, and during this period, guidance and instruction was 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.

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 in to Rotary well equipped in knowledge and enthusiasm to carry out the tasks demanded by the movement.

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".

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 Holmer 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 Above Self" with Marshall Ledingham as its first President.

Rotary Club of Burslem Founder Members

Dr. W. M. LEDINGHAM, M.B., Ch.B. (President)
A. L. H. BARKER (Vice-President)
N. M. STOWE (Secretary)

R. K. BAILEY
A. S. TENNANT
F. ASKEY
H. BRIGGS
A. J. CLIFF
L. W. CLIFF
W. H. DAVIES
R. B. HAMMERSLEY
R. A. HAMILTON
T. D. HOLDCROFT
C. L. H. HOYLE
T. H. JONES
A. H. RILEY
E. J. SADLER
REV. A. R. SMITH
R. C. SMART
R. C. H. WALTON
F. E. WALTON
H. C. WALKER
J. H. WESTLAKE
H. WHALLEY
C. P. WOOD