

Rosebery Park Public Party - Sat 21st Sept.

Rotary is a global Club of like-minded individuals, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers founded in 1905 in Chicago in the United States, working to give something back to the community they live in. Epsom Rotary Club is celebrating one hundred years of working with the Community in Epsom on 21st September in **Rosebery Park**. This will be a fun filled day for all the family with market stalls, rides for children, entertainment, and food stands. It promises to be a day of family fun and entertainment. [See event entry [HERE](#)]

Rotary began its association with the people of Epsom in June 1924 with an inaugural lunch held by local businessmen marking the start of the Rotary Club of Epsom. Early Community involvement provided a member representative on the Epsom Cottage Hospital Committee and supporting street collections for the hospital fund. Very quickly the club provided support for disabled service men at the Star and Garter home and the Club began providing Christmas hampers to local distressed elderly.

The Armed Forces service connection was restored recently in 2020 when Surrey County Council and Royal British Legion Surrey started a monthly hub for military veterans who were potentially isolated and lonely. This is organised by Epsom Rotary and RBL Epsom and Ewell in partnership, with two offshoot activity groups, archery and model making. Over thirty members of various ages, men and women have formed small friendship / support groups of their own and are offered coach outings such as to the D Day Museum Portsmouth. This year we have organised trips to the Poppy Factory in Richmond, and the Christmas lights in the West End.

Veterans' Hub members and supporters

Into the late 1920s/30s Epsom Rotary worked locally as Rotary members played an active role in restarting the Epsom Chamber of Commerce and nationally providing cash and clothing for the hunger marches during the General Strike in 1926. The Club continued to expand its involvement locally during the second World War by supporting Armed Forces personnel at the anti-aircraft gun sites at Ashted and Headley and the Canadian soldier's military hospital at West Park.



In the Community the Club was instrumental in starting the Annual Careers exhibition in 1957 and soon after visits to Wisley Gardens were organised for the elderly in the community. In 1957 Epsom Rotary set up a Christmas tree by the clocktower in the town Centre which was an annual event for many years. During the 1970s Thomas the tank engine arrived as part of the Christmas Street collections. The train was constructed by apprentices at Epsom Coaches and remains the centre piece of Christmas collections to this day focussed on Epsom and Langley Vale, now renamed as Tilly the train. These are always joyous occasions with great excitement amongst both children and parents as the train approaches.

Recent years

In 2012 in conjunction with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council the Rotary clubs of Epsom and Ewell organised a Community Fun day at Hook Road arena with a fun fair, pitches for local artisans and charities. This proved highly successful and continued until 2019 until the pandemic.

The Centenary Party in the Park in Rosebery Park is a natural successor to this with the added element that it is a celebration of one hundred years of Epsom Rotary serving the Community. In recent years, the Club has developed more “service related” projects which involves members giving more of their time to work on Community projects. This approach has always been part of the Rotary ethos. Examples include supporting the Veterans Hub highlighted earlier, leasing an allotment from the local Council with a small group of resolute members growing an increasing volume of fruit and vegetables which are donated over the summer months to the Pantry, the Good Company/Food Bank shop in South Street in Epsom.

A current activity is providing support/volunteers to work on an Epsom BID led project called Family Fridays that provides family activities in the town centre for young families in the school summer holidays.

Epsom Rotary continues to prioritise support for young people with regional competitions for Young Musicians, Young Chef and



French speaking competitions.

International

The first international visit undertaken by the Club was to the Rotary Club of Rheims in France in 1937 and the Club now has an association with the Rotary Club of Chantilly in France which started in the 1990s and there have been several visits in both directions. This ties in with the town twinning of Epsom and Chantilly and reinforces our shared involvement with the horse racing industry.

The Club has been involved in several international projects with the current focus being AMECA, a small charity in Malawi providing medical services to the local community in a rural setting. The charity has recently built a maternity unit in an area in great need of support for women and children. Secondly, we have supported the Zimbabwe Victims Support Fund for the last five years, which is a small charity supporting dispossessed families, mainly women and children in Zimbabwe.

The future

As we have seen Rotary continues to evolve whilst reacting to the needs in the local community. We face many challenges, particularly attracting new members from the diverse spread of residents locally the Club needs to continue to thrive. There is less emphasis on procedure and formality which potentially enables a wider cross-section of the local community to become involved.

Rotary is a unique organisation which like no other, gives opportunities to become involved in education, community support, training, international activities, visits to other countries, social welfare, and hands-on experience. The challenge is to ensure that our Club can adapt to whatever the future holds yet retain our essential purpose of 'service above self.'

Summary

Throughout the Clubs "100 years in Epsom", it has actively looked for opportunities to take part in local charity projects. One of the threads which runs through the Club's history is its contribution to the local community and its close relationship with the Borough Council. From the beginning its membership has included ex-mayors, councillors, and senior officers of the local authority. Over the past one hundred years it has participated in civic ceremonies, attended the annual Mayor's reception and nowadays the incoming mayor is an honorary member of the Club.

Jim Munns - Joint President Epsom Rotary Club

If you wish to join Epsom Rotary you may apply [HERE](#)