

District 1150



June 2018

BRUIN

Brecon Rotary Update, Information & News



Owen welcoming new member Janet



Profile – Richard Walters

I was born in Brecon Hospital in July 1959. Mum and Dad had lived at the Wern Farm since 1956. The story goes that Dad's sheepdog refused to work on that day and thereafter sat by my pram outside the side door looking after me, and thus took his early retirement.

After a quiet start in life, at age 4 I ventured into the Convent. The nuns were always good to me and I seem to remember spending most of my first year at school on a large rocking horse with Sister Immaculata. This was a great place but it was soon disrupted when at 8 I went to the Downs Prep School in Colwall, just outside Malvern. After my good Catholic start I now found myself in a Quaker school. One of the fringe benefits was that the Cadbury family were governors and after every leave-out weekend we were presented with a bar of chocolate: going back to school wasn't so bad. Anyway, despite it being a slightly Victorian regime, featuring cold showers at 7am, it was a caring, fun place. The school had lots of grounds and included in my uniform was a boiler suit and Wellington boots for "hutting and damming", a Sunday afternoon activity in the woods. There was a small-gauge fully-operational steam railway in the grounds run by one of the masters, known to the boys as "Chuff-Chuff Boyd". The school had a super head of music who really inspired me to practice the piano, sing and start the violin. I made it to head boy at The

Downs before going on to No 3 at Malvern College. I was lucky that I had a very progressive House Master at No 3 and consequently missed all the fagging and Victorian public-school features. Fives was my best game, and I played for the school regularly and have maintained an interest in the sport to this day. Music continued to be in the fore and I was leader of the chamber and school orchestra in the 6th form.

Manchester University was my next port of call, for a BSc (hons) in Metallurgy. This was an exciting time for me and fives featured quite heavily as there were courts in the University and the YMCA and a strong group of Manchester-based players. The University Orchestra was also one of my favourite free-time activities: we had many an enjoyable concert during my time in Manchester. During this time I discovered jazz. There was a wonderful club in a slightly seedy part of the city called *Band on the Wall* where I enjoyed many great nights out watching talented musicians through a smoky haze.

After graduating in 1980 I was taken on as graduate trainee with British Leyland, employed in research and development at Gaydon in Warwickshire. At the end of a year of moving around the company doing different things I eventually ended up taking a job at Unipart and moving to Oxford. After several roles within Unipart I took on the role of European parts sales manager for Jaguar Cars in 1985. This involved setting up private importers across Europe, as Jaguar had been privatised and moved away from British Leyland. I continued with Jaguar through the Ford years and witnessed the vehicle production increase as the reputation of the vehicles improved.

In 1995 I was approached by Andersen Consulting to be involved with a joint venture with New Holland to develop and roll out a computer system to manage inventory across Europe. This was an exciting time and the project was a big success but after a few years I had started a family and wanted to spend less time traveling. My next position was as Logistics Director for a Swiss company called Omya UK based in Dorking in Surrey. The family moved in 1998 down to Warnham in Sussex and that was where my children Henry and Annalisa grew up in our idyllic little village with a post office, shop, school, two pubs and a church. As with most things Omya had a change of fortune in the mid noughties and decided to contract and move to Matlock. I resisted the move to Derbyshire at that time and ended up doing a couple of years of consultancy work for Dennis Bus and Fire Engines in Guildford. This was mostly about improving the spare parts business for the company.

After this I joined a small manufacturing company called Automotive Technik. They were importing to Guildford an Austrian 6x6 vehicle, the Pinzgauer, made in Graz. Two ex-army officers had sold the vehicle to the MOD. This had all gone very well except that after they had received and delivered 50 vehicles Magna Steyr, the manufacturer, decided they were going to stop production. Automotive Technik decided they would build the vehicle under licence and started to move all the production to the UK. My immediate challenge was not to run out of axles for production, but there were enough components to build 150 vehicles in Vienna. This was a very exciting challenge and involved understanding all the German technical specifications for the process and physically moving components and test equipment from Graz and Vienna to set up a small production line in Guildford. I still remember walking around an empty factory in Vienna with the last two Austrians in the company who knew anything about assembling the axles! What followed was taking over a small factory in Guildford employing some staff and setting up assembly and testing.

Around this time my marriage broke up and I was considering a fresh start. Sad as I was to leave Sussex behind, I thought I had to grasp the opportunity to get back to Brecon. My mum was keeping the farm business going after Dad passed away and it seemed the right time to come back to Brecon. Since that time, I have become immersed in Farming and Holiday lets and seem to be going as fast as ever, enjoying being back in Wales. My activities to date include planting a cider apple orchard, building up a flock of sheep and moving the holiday let business forward.

The cider orchard is a 5-acre plot with 412 half standard cider trees. I was lucky 3 years ago when I planted it as, to the envy of many other orchard owners, we didn't lose one tree after planting. I put it down to the weather, which was kind to me that year, as it rained for most of the summer. You probably remember it well! As for the cider, it is early days yet, but I have a



harvest and festival for friends and force them to drink the previous year's production at a modest little supper. There is, as a rule, quite a lot of grimacing but, to my credit, I haven't put anyone in hospital to date. This year the orchard was in full blossom in late May and I hope to have a bumper crop of apples in the autumn.

As for farming, I have built up a flock of 250 ewes from our own small flock over the last few years. They started off being Welsh ewes and have been crossed with Texel and Charolais rams but currently we are using hardier Beulah rams. Lambing was quite hard this year with the weather being against us since December, and on seeing the third lot of snow arriving in March I wasn't sure if we were ever going to get out of it. Ewes and lambs are all doing well now, and everything looks a lot better since it finally warmed up a bit a month ago. We farm organically, and I have put more land into organic conversion last year. We also have Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the farm and quite a number of unusual plants, not to mention lots of orchids at this time of the year.

Outside work I still enjoy music and try to play the piano every day; I belong to Brecon Singers and a small group that sight sing madrigals composed circa 1600. I try to get to Cardiff a few times a year to see some opera.

Helping with the Brecon Show was always a date for the diary when I lived in Oxford and Sussex. I used to turn up, have a good lunch and watch all my peer group doing all the hard work. So, it is partially out of guilt that I now feel I should do my penance organising traffic for 1500 vehicles on a site that can only be entered and exited on show day over a very small single lane canal bridge! My most amusing morning on show day was finding a small Renault car just sitting in the rugby ground entrance blocking the traffic. I approached the slightly steamed up car and tapped on the window, which was dutifully wound down, and asked the slightly perplexed driver what he was doing there.

"Je ne sais pas" was the prompt reply. "I was just driving into Brecon minding my own business and this very officious police woman furiously directed me over that little tiny bridge."

"Do you like farm animals?" I enquired.

"Oui," was the reply.

“Well,” I said, “you have arrived at the oldest agricultural show in the UK and if you just drive through that gate you should have an excellent day.”

The little Frenchman was reported by a member of staff to be enjoying himself later!

In the final analysis of the Brecon Show, everyone comes to help and the enthusiasm of all the volunteers is what makes the whole day. It remains a great agricultural show and everyone is committed to keeping it going for the community. It may be just a coincidence but one of my first contacts with Rotary was asking Anne if she could staff one of the six pedestrian and car gates on Show day. Who knows? That might have even influenced me into becoming a member!



Saving lives after dinner

The Fun Night on 21 May was a different kind of fun. It was where—after eating heartily—we found out what might happen if we suffered a cardiac arrest. A former Metropolitan Police officer, Donna Gair, is an expert on resuscitation and gave a vigorous demonstration of CPR. Never mind a cracked rib or two, it was saving a life that mattered.

Donna was not short of a wisecrack or two, which helped to keep the demonstration entertaining as well as informative. I went away with two main points in my head, the most important of which was to ensure that you call the emergency services before you do anything else. The second was to find a defibrillator if you can because anyone can use one and it's a more effective procedure than CPR.

But if there is no defibrillator available, the aim of CPR is to pump blood around the body when the person is unconscious and has stopped breathing. What struck me was the speed with which it had to be done and it left me exhausted just watching Donna do it.

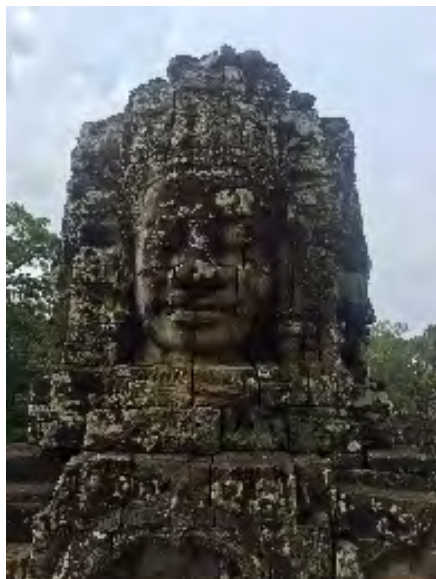
I just hope that someone like Donna is around when it's my turn to need such treatment. Come to think of it, many of us round the table were more likely to be at the receiving end of this procedure rather than administering it!

- Glyn



On the move – two itineraries

Ding Dong merrily in Indochina



Our trip was mainly to Vietnam via a few days in Siem Reap in Cambodia. Whilst poor, Cambodia has one of the fastest growing economies in Asia with growth averaging 6% over the last decade. We explored the temples in the Angkor Complex including Angkor Thom, Preah Khan Temple, Ta Prohm and Angkor Wat, the world heritage site.

Angkor Thom

We then flew on to Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. The Vietnamese people are genuinely friendly and welcoming. The founding father of modern Vietnam



is Ho Chi Minh. He spent about eight years working and traveling, mostly as a cook or a baker, but also as a dishwasher. First in France, then the UK, then in the US before heading back to France. He led Vietnam's communist revolution against French colonial rule and then took on the US, winning in 1975.

Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum

The currency in Vietnam is the Dong. This has to be one of the most confusing currencies in the world as 30,000 dong = £1. It is somewhat confusing with 30,000 dong being a very small sum of money, and before you know it, the mind has boggled and you're messing up the zeros. Not only are most westerners billionaires, but most cash withdrawals you make will be in the millions. Fortunately (or not!) the US dollar is welcomed and this is slightly less confusing to a simple man from the Valleys.



Halong Bay

We cruised on board a traditional junk. The cruise passed some lovely islands. Perhaps most interesting was Ti-top island, named after the second Russian in space. We tackled 425 steps to the top of the island for this shot.

Vietnamese cuisine is becoming renowned around the world thanks to its reputation for being exceptionally healthy. Flavours like lemongrass, ginger, coriander and mint enhance fresh vegetables, meats and

seafood without a lot of oil, dairy or heavy sauces. Tess and I enjoyed many fine meals.

We travelled from North to South in Vietnam via Danang, Hoi An and on to Hue, where we caught our breath on the lovely beach. We enjoyed visiting the home of the Nguyen Dynasty emperors, the Imperial City and the Royal Citadel. Much of the Citadel was destroyed during the Tet Offensive but is gradually being restored.

They say that history is written by the victor and that is certainly true of the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. The US tactics in the Vietnam War are critically questioned and the use of Napalm/Agent Orange is interpreted as genocide. Whatever the truth the visit was a very emotional experience and provided a disturbing alternate view of a conflict which unfolded in my youth. Many interesting sights in Saigon and we also enjoyed a boat trip on the Mekong Delta. Reminiscent of the film *Apocalypse Now*.



There seem to be 2-3 motorbikes for every man, woman and child in Vietnamese cities. Add to this a general disregard of traffic lights and the Highway Code and you get chaos (organised chaos, as everyone else seems to know what they're doing). This makes

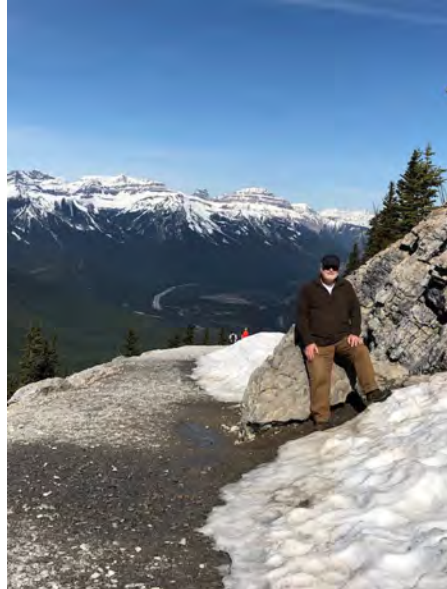
walking around Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh treacherous. If you wait for a gap in traffic to cross a road in a major city you'd be there for days. The only way was to start walking at a steady pace and—whatever you do—don't stop. It may sound like madness, but the motorcyclists anticipate this and move well in advance. All motorists are very patient, however, and road rage doesn't seem to exist.

We enjoyed a fantastic experience in a different culture. Try it!

- **Brian** Birtles

The Canadian Rockies and Alaska

Gatwick to Calgary and on to beguiling Banff.



Black bears on the Icefields Parkway,



every turn of the road displaying a fresh vista of craggy, white-capped peaks, like so many Brecon Rotarians in a row. Frozen Lake Louise, Jasper, westwards over the Rockies and south to Vancouver. Embark for Juneau and on to the Yukon gold-rush town of Skagway celebrating its past, brothels and all. Sign on a

Lumberjacks in Ketchikan and a Tlingit village,



culminating in stunning Glacier Bay



before returning to Vancouver and the flight back to Gatwick.

Jet lag.
- Jeff



The Red Kites Under 9 Girls Rugby Team hosted by Gwernyfed Rugby Club in Talgarth. The Club's Community Chest recently awarded them £450 to purchase four tents to use as shelter during the season for their four teams.

Dates for the diary

18 June	Dinner meeting	16 July	DG visit
22 June	Fun night: Wine tasting	23 July	Speaker meeting
24 June	Summer solstice: Crug	30 July	Breakfast meeting
25 June	Club Assembly	4 August	Brecon Show
2 July	Business meeting	6 August	Business meeting
7 July	Charter night	13 August	Speaker meeting
9 July	Speaker meeting	20 August	Fun night: Bowls
14 July	Nikki Grist Rally	27 August	No meeting

Speakers

9 July	Rebecca Chamberlain and Gill Colerick, The Stroke Association
23 July	Misha Pedersen, Wye and Usk Foundation
13 August	John Gibbs, Chairman, Brecknock Society & Museum Friends, on the new Brecon Cultural Hub
17 September	Louis Mahendra, Lotus Fund

Bottle Rota

18 June	Nick Morrell
25 June	Brian Newman