

# BRUIN

## Brecon Rotary Update, Information & News

### Presidential travels - Extracts from the blog

There was some discussion about which clinic was expecting a visit today but eventually Sehonghong was decided upon and, with five of us in the car, off we drove. The tarmac ran out almost immediately and the road narrowed to a single potholed track. Once again the views were spectacular. The Brecon Beacons on steroids. The road winds along the side of steep hillsides and the driver had an unnerving habit of swerving towards the edge in the hope of avoiding the potholes. Two hours of that later we arrived at the clinic. Unfortunately they weren't expecting us and there were no patients so after a short break we turned around and headed home. Back on the open road there was a chance to cool off. Eventually we arrived back in Thaba Tseke nearly 6 hours after we had left. It was a lovely drive but I am not sure it was a good use of our day.

Today marks the halfway point in my placement here in Lesotho and so far it has been everything they said it would be: exciting, fascinating, terrifying and above all challenging. The main stresses, as always, have come from within. Am I doing the right thing? Should I be achieving more? I've also surprised myself about how I have reacted to spending so much time on my own. Turns out I am an extrovert.

Appropriately today's trip was to Morija where the first French missionaries settled in 1833. It is a beautiful place and it was another opportunity to see Hijinx perform and catch up with the teachers from Thaba Tseke who were also in Morija for a break. The performers for Hijinx kept us all enthralled again in the sunshine. They were performing in the grounds of one of the few museums in Lesotho. This gave me an opportunity to find out more about the local history, get to know Lesothosaurus a bit better and try on a rather splendid hat.



Arrived in Hlotse late yesterday afternoon and checked in to what seemed to be the smartest accommodation to date. Very comfy with a few mod cons some of which even seem to work. No sooner than I had settled in there was a “Koko” at the door and my evening meal was delivered to my room. It was quite a shock but not as much of a shock as when I turned on the hot water switch this morning, got in the shower and discovered that all the metal was now live. I got quite a belt of electricity and struggled to get out of the shower again. No long term damage done I think.

No electric shocks this morning but then no water either. Electrician came round yesterday evening and found that the earth wire, and several others, had become loose and had resulted in me becoming the earth.

The level of roadworthiness required for vehicles is an interesting conundrum when the economy relies on transport but people are still using ox carts to do their shopping. Frequently vehicles pass by belching black smoke or clearly overladen. That combined with the potholes which litter the streets does mean that Lesotho’s roads are not an attractive place to be but the scenery either side of them outside the towns definitely makes up for it.

Next week I am going to be based in Maseru all week so I’ve been trying to arrange some meetings to make the most of my time. I started this morning with a meeting with Manyane. We discussed the list of people I wanted to see and he said we can try but it is the end of the month and everyone disappears from their office. True enough phones went unanswered, emails and WhatsApps not returned. “You will see the roads are busy and it is best not to go into town tonight.”

Most things here take longer and it does mean that for most women in the country domestic chores prevent them from pursuing careers outside the home. At least there is plenty of heat to facilitate the drying at this time of year and my washing is dry in a couple of hours. All the heat usually builds up until there is a thunderstorm to clear the air. This afternoon’s has been particularly impressive. I think the weather here is feeling intimidated by the “beast from the east” so it has thrown a bit of hail in with the thunder, lightning and torrential rain. The electricity has now gone off too so it may be back to candles and torches this evening. This is not such a bad thing as the tv here is pretty awful unless you like reruns of CSI and NCIS although I am developing a bit of an addiction to Rizzoli and Isles.



After a very pleasant coffee it was time to head back to the guesthouse and finish a paperback I had bought at the airport. Next week is a little empty at the moment but hopefully that will change. I have a list of things to accomplish and the pace of life here means it is going to be a challenge to complete them.

- Owen

## Profile – Glyn Mathias

Glyn responded to my request for a profile, not with a chronological autobiographical narrative, but with a set of anecdotes about one region in which he worked. His concluding comments, valuable as the reflections of a distinguished journalist drawing on his experiences, reflect his personal opinion and not the views of the Club.

- Jeff

## Border wars

I.

It was the coldest day of December 1981 and the fog came down in the evening. A bunch of journalists who worked at Westminster were due to fly to Dublin for a series of meetings set up by the Irish government. But the fog had closed Dublin airport so, after a long wait, we flew to Belfast instead. At short notice, a bus had been arranged to drive us down to Dublin.

The bus was antiquated and had no form of heating. The cold was penetrating and some of my colleagues resorted to pushing sheets of newspaper down their trousers in order to keep warm. Someone came up with the bright suggestion that liquor might help to alleviate the cold, so we persuaded the driver to stop at the next pub and the late John Cole (then political editor of the BBC) and I got the landlord to sell us a variety of bottles of whisky and brandy. Thereafter the mood improved considerably, and we didn't mind that our Irish hosts in Dublin had clearly enjoyed the reception party for several hours without us.

The next day we were due to set out for the border with Northern Ireland, where the aim of the Irish government was to show us how difficult it was to police the border and stop the IRA slipping into the South to escape pursuers. There was snow on the ground and it was still bitterly cold. We stopped at the Irish army base at Dundalk for a briefing, and from there our bus was led by a column of Irish army jeeps, with the faces of the soldiers blacked up in the snow – a sort of Irish camouflage.

We arrived at the border and the soldiers jumped out of their jeeps and fanned out with their rifles at the ready. A British helicopter was monitoring the situation above the hill to the north. As we disembarked from the bus I noticed that by the roadside was the same pub from which we had bought our liquor the night before – in the dark with no protection whatever. We walked along a narrow road parallel to the border. Over here was the place where the body of Captain Robert Nairac was found after he had been tortured and killed by the IRA. Over there was a small bridge that had been blown up by the IRA, killing several British soldiers. A number of local people cycled past us as if this was entirely normal countryside.

The border mattered then and it matters again now. It is too easy to forget the Troubles (as they were sometimes euphemistically called) if you are this side of the Irish Sea. But they can't forget in Ireland because too many people died. I did not spend more than a few weeks in Northern Ireland in the 70's and 80's, but it was enough to understand the ferocity of feeling. You could not drive into Belfast City centre without being held up at an army cordon, with British soldiers – often young and nervous – covering the traffic with their machine guns. I can recall filming an IRA demonstration in Derry within sight of a fortress of a British army base – the British powerless to prevent it. We had to pay some local lads to look after the car while we were filming in case it was hijacked. It was a shock to see the police stations protected by steel mesh fencing all the way up to the roof. The Belfast hotel we normally stayed in had guards out the front, but the IRA just told them to run away and they threw a bomb into the hotel foyer.

It was a way of life that has changed, and you can now walk around the centre of Belfast as if it was any other city in the United Kingdom. But the Good Friday Agreement reached in 1998 was not that long ago, and the old passions are still there. I recall a few

years ago in Derry visiting the Protestant St Colomb's Cathedral where there was a magnificent stained-glass window depicting the siege of Derry. A verger told us the story of how the siege by a Catholic army was relieved by the forces of the Protestant "King Billy". He told the story with tears in his eyes, his voice choked with emotion. It was as if it was yesterday and not 1689.



a young reporter in Beijing

2.

I remembered this verger when I heard recently that the talks to re-establish power-sharing in Northern Ireland had broken down yet again because the DUP refused to countenance any form of legislation to recognise the Irish language. Sinn Fein are equally conflicted about proposals to investigate killings during the Troubles. Into this fragile situation stepped the British government with their plans for Brexit and their uncertain solutions for the Irish border.

The border still matters. The American senator George Mitchell (who played a part in the peace process) warned a few days ago that there could be serious trouble ahead if checks were reintroduced on the border between South and North. It is not just the practicalities of how border checks would work. It is about disinterring old passions and enmities that we thought we had left behind us.

- Glyn

### Club Community Chest

The end of 2017 saw another successful round of the Community Chest scheme. The scheme allows local clubs and organisations an opportunity to bid for grants of up to £500 to support projects which enhance community life for the catchment area of our club.

The following organisations / projects are amongst those that have benefited from £3,450 worth of funding over the past 12 months: Talgarth Luncheon Club, Brecknock Little Theatre, Brecon Volunteer Bureau, South Powys Youth Music, Brecon Prom Fest, take pART, Brecon Neuro Café (Stroke Association), Brecon Folk and More Club and 1st Brecon Scouts.

The grants scheme is supported by a panel of Rotarians including Owen, Neil, Cath, Glyn, Nick, Pat, Brian Newman, Roger and Clive. Many of these undertook visits to the

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prospective recipients as part of the scheme. A great way to have a presence in the community as well as getting to know more about the project or scheme.

The latest round saw £2,000 being shared equally between

- \* Priory CiW Primary Schools - Community Garden Project
- \* Wye and Usk Foundation - A River Runs through It, a project working in association with MIND, providing mentoring for volunteers with mental health issues to work within their community
- \* Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, enabling additional capacity to be provided for the Hear to Help Voluntary service within the Brecon Area and
- \* Brecon Music Live Forever Autumn - a follow-on scheme from Songs for the Summer, a musical entertainment program for residents of Care Homes within the Brecon area, particularly aimed at people with Dementia.



Those shortlisted were all invited to an informal cheque presentation event which two of the receiving organisations attended.

The Spring 2018 round is now open and Rotarians are encouraged to share details of the scheme with anyone they feel might benefit. Further details and application forms can be found on our website.

- Cath

## The Saga of the Well

### A little history

It must be widely assumed that the well in Bethel Square was used for the needs of the Golden Lion Inn, which stood on the site. There was stabling for 50 horses and the stage-coach from London via Hereford would arrive there every day. People would congregate to see what the coach had brought, perhaps a refugee or maybe a piano! The Inn was a busy place in the 18th and early 19th Century, because it was handy for the Guildhall where winter balls were held, and where the military officers and local bigwigs would mingle. There is a sepulchral slab dedicated to a periwig maker in the Cathedral, as it happens. There is

also one to Thomas Longfellow, the proprietor of the Golden Lion who died in 1814. Prior to the building of the Barracks, troops were accommodated in the Inn which had been specially adapted for the purpose. It later became an elementary school. The Welsh Methodists bought the Inn with all its outhouses in 1843, hence the presence of Bethel Chapel (now Boots Chemists) in its yard.

- Peter

### How this project came about

It all started in mid September 2017 whilst visiting the town of Bala. Had I known then what I know now I would have suggested we stayed in a different town (we being Lesley and myself). What follows is, after all, *all down to her!* Having booked into our hotel for a long weekend (two days too long for this place as it turned out), I collected the cases from the car and took them to the room. “Have you seen the Rotary Wishing Well?” she asked. “What wishing well?” I replied. “The yellow one outside the front door of the hotel” came the reply.

Now many of you may not know it, but I do tend to “not register things around me,” for example people I pass while walking in the street and oncoming cars that flash me as I pass them. I do not do this intentionally and it usually gets me into trouble, however on this occasion I remember seeing a tap and a sign about washing walking boots. Both of these things were next to a large yellow dish-like object with a hole in it. I put 2 and 2 together and came up with 5. That must be the sink to wash your boots in, I thought. Looking at the unit again more carefully next time I emerged from the hotel, I thought that’s exactly what we need for the wishing well in Bethel Square.

### The well as it was

How the well came to be used by Rotary I am not sure, but I expect there are some members who could answer that for me. One thing for sure is that as long as I can remember since being a member of the Brecon Club there have always been discussions on what to do to clean it up. Mike Stratford did introduce the new roundel a few years back and Mike Evans painted and revamped the collecting box below the grid. There was talk of asking the schools to come up with suggestions on how to improve it but nothing came of that. So the well has stayed basically the same since we started using it to raise funds for charitable use.

### The solution and design brief

Having seen the spiral well in Bala I thought that if the same well could be fitted in Bethel Square we might solve some age-old problems:

- Stop coins accumulating on the mesh below the collection chamber
- Make it attractive and fun to give donations
- Give Brecon Rotary long-needed permanent publicity in the town
- Stop rubbish build-up
- Provide an information point when holding events such as Blood Pressure Day etc.
- Make the spiral well section removable for use at other events

### Design requirements and solutions

For the well to undergo such a large change there were several requirements to be addressed:

1. As the existing well was not uniform there needed to be an easily adjustable way to mount the coin shoot in the well without drilling the existing stonework. This was achieved

by clamping large brackets on the four metal uprights which could be slid up and down for levelling purposes and tightened in place.

2. The space between the coin shoot and well sides needed to be filled in. Filler pieces were scribed around the well and fixed to the same brackets.

3. The coin shoot needed to be locked in place but should be easily removed to empty the contents and taken away for external events. Using the same brackets to mount the spiral unit, a four-point bayonet fixing was made to locate under each bracket by rotating the complete assembly into the correct position and locked in place by a five-lever deadlock.

4. When the coin shoot is removed the space left should be kept secure and still available to receive donations. A replacement disk was used to fill the space and fixed in the same manner as the spiral well. A hole was drilled in this disk so coins could still be accepted.

5. Coins ideally should be stored dry and be easily removed from the well. See the operation section below.

6. Information in the form of posters or signs that can be changed should be attached to the well. A double-sided sign with lockable clip frames was attached to span opposite posts of the well.



### Operation

In situations of high precipitation, which in Brecon is most of the year, and in order to alleviate the embarrassment of Nick depositing

dirty coins at the bank, coins that are launched into the well go through a short wash programme followed by a fast spin cycle just before they disappear from view. Once the coins have exited down the hole in the middle the sheer brilliance of the design takes over: they enter an invisible mass accelerator directing them to the collection hopper accelerating as they go and then pass through the primary H<sub>2</sub>O separator and coin deflector into the angular adjustable full-length inspection chamber which incorporates a three-stage aqua currency diverter with integrated drip rails and finish in the removable coin storage receptacle which also houses the secondary H<sub>2</sub>O separator.

The design guideline for this part of the well is very specific, namely that for 1" of rainfall per hour (0.21 litres per minute) to pass through the device at an angle of 15 degrees there should be no trace of any deposits in the final storage receptacle. (Water, that is, not coins!) Preliminary tests carried out in the laboratory were encouraging and initial results show that 2.2 litres passed through the unit in 45 seconds with no measurable precipitation passing into the coin storage receptacle. This test equates to a rainfall of 14" per hour which is a 1400% safety margin. Even Sennybridge doesn't get that sort of rainfall!

Coins were successfully propelled through the unit at the design angle of 15 degrees.

For the discerning reader/engineer who prefers a more detailed explanation of the science behind the manufacturing processes involved rather than the somewhat simplistic explanation given above, the whole unit is a piece of 4” soil pipe with lots of holes drilled into it! And a bucket.

- Clive



Hayley welcomes new member Jim Stock, who transferred from the Lewes Barbican Rotary Club.

### Dates for the diary

19 March	Fun: Murder Mystery (postponed)	30 April	Breakfast meeting
26 March	Speaker meeting	14 May	Business meeting
9 April	Business meeting	21 May	First Aid
20 April	Fun: wine tasting	4 June	Club Assembly & AGM
23 April	Speaker meeting	11 June	Dinner meeting

### Speakers

26 March	Roy Garnell BEM* on anti-terror duty during the Troubles
23 April	Julian Atkins, new CEO Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
25 June	Rebecca Chamberlain and Gill Colerick, The Stroke Association
23 July	Misha Pedersen, Wye and Usk Foundation

### Bottle Rota

19 March	Carol Herbert	16 April	Owen Hughes
26 March	Howard Hoare	23 April	Anne Ingham

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9 April

John Hopkins

30 April

Peter Jenkins

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