

The *changing* face of ROTARY

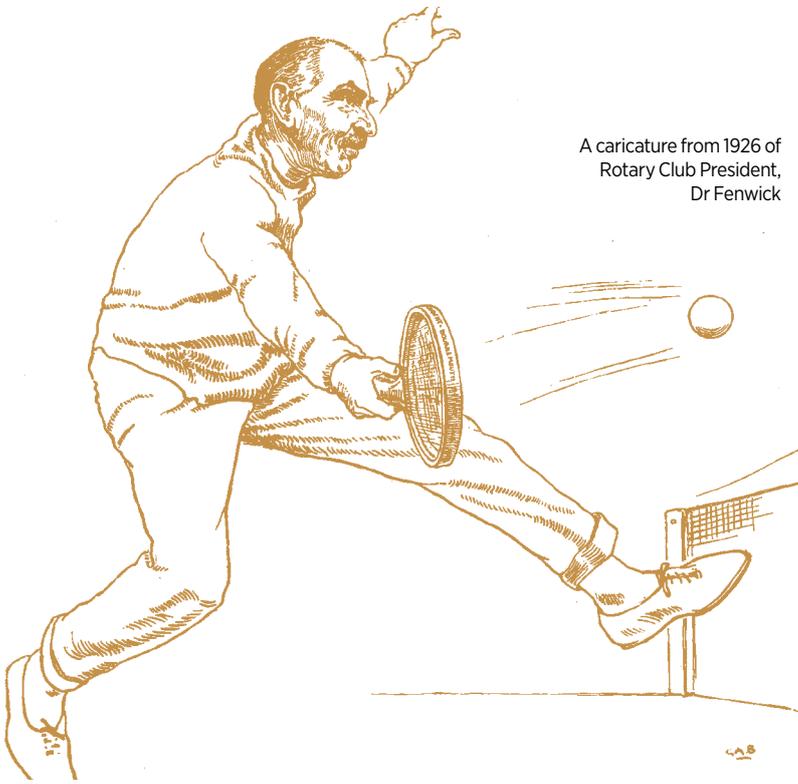


Roz Scammell, Centenary
President, with Ram
Abiram, President Elect
at the Rotary Club of
Bournemouth's 100th
Anniversary dinner
at the Hilton Hotel

In 1918 the business men who founded the Rotary Club of
Bournemouth wanted to support the local community.
A century later there is a woman at the helm continuing their legacy

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A caricature from 1926 of
Rotary Club President,
Dr Fenwick



It's probably not an image that Bournemouth's tourist chiefs are keen to promote but Roz Scammell is talking about child-poverty and the growing problems it is creating in Dorset's flagship holiday resort.

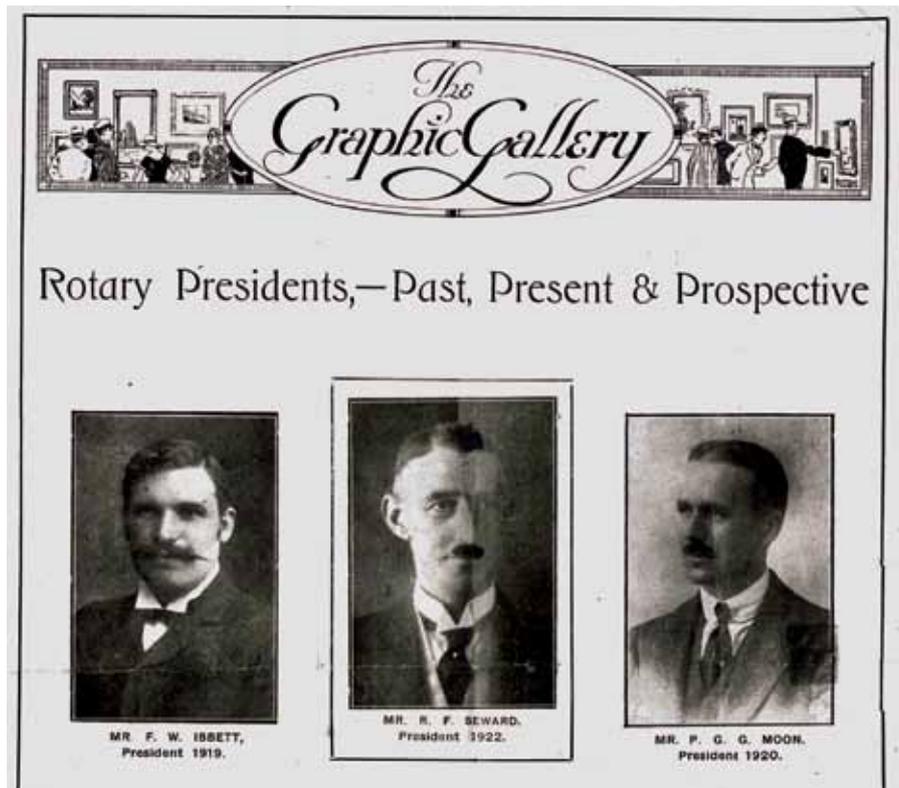
"We have one of the fastest growing areas of child poverty right here in Bournemouth," she tells me. "It's not very obvious and a lot of people don't see it."

Roz, a nurse, who is also president of the town's Rotary

Club does see it and knows only too well that a chasm is opening up between the haves and have-nots. "A local headmaster recently told me that three or four pupils in every class come to school without having breakfast."

For Roz the answer is to engage and help. Indeed it is the Rotary Club's ethos and in this, the Rotary Club of Bournemouth's centenary year, she sees it as a duty for every citizen to embrace.

"We have got to contribute. The



council hasn't got a bottomless pit of money. If you want to live in a clean environment you have to help keep it clean," she declares. "We have to help create the sort of society we aspire to."

As the Rotary Club of Bournemouth celebrates 100 years of existence, it is intriguing to ponder on how much life has changed over the past century. In 1918 the pace of daily life was so much slower, and class and status were of paramount importance. It was also a world emerging from the ravages of a world war and with one foot still firmly planted

'We have to help create the sort of society we aspire to'



An official photograph from 1968 of the 50th anniversary of the Rotary Club of Bournemouth



Swanage Boys Camp, a photograph from the 1940s.

Get involved

Fundraising: The Rotary Club of Bournemouth's main fundraising thrust during its centenary year is for two mental health charities: Combat Stress and Young Minds. The focus will be on a big raffle offering prizes that include a fortnight at La Manga Luxury Golf Resort in Spain and a day with the Red Arrows.

Meetings: Weekly on Mondays at 1pm in the Mayfair Hotel, 27 Bath Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2NW. Evening Group for younger (aged 30+) business people meets monthly on the first Wednesday at 6.30pm. The two groups meet jointly several times a year. **To find out more visit bournemouthrotary.org.uk.**

in the Edwardian era.

Roz herself represents one decidedly welcome change. As Britain's first black female Rotary Club president she is at the vanguard of the organisation's growing inclusiveness and diversity.

Sift through the club's extensive archives and you quickly see what a different place Bournemouth was when the club was established in October 1918 during a meeting at the Gervis Hall Restaurant - now the Steamer Trading Cook Shop.

Suitable members were identified from the local town directory. Worthy individuals were elected to office. The first president was Bournemouth's director of education, Mr F.W. Ibbett, while the vice president, Mr P.G.G. Noon, was a bigwig from the town's gas and water company.

These were influential members of the local community



A caricature from 1923 of Rotary Club President, Mr Whitting

Historical photos and illustrations: Bournemouth Rotary Club Archives

intent on helping the needy and promoting development and social change, but always with an eye on the growth and wealth of the community.

In the age of the Suffragettes it is perhaps significant that they were all, without exception, men. Roz chuckles as she tells me about the speech she made at the recent centenary gala: "I'm sure that when this club was formed Mr Noon and Mr Ibbett certainly wouldn't have had me in mind, but I think Mrs Pankhurst might have been quite pleased."

However, having studied the club minutes, she believes the founders were exactly the kind of people who, in a different social era, would have embraced both gender and ethnic diversity. "They were men of vision. I suspect that as society changed their ideas would have changed too. I have great admiration for what they did for Bournemouth."

The history of the club reveals remarkable achievements, benefitting many charities, individuals as well as the town itself. It is arguable that the world-class Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) would not exist today if it hadn't been for Rotary. BSO founder Sir Dan Godfrey was a leading Rotarian and used his influence and impressive contacts to steer its forerunner, the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, through financially difficult times.

In recent years young local musicians have been supported by groups like the Coda Fiddle Orchestra, led by Jack Maguire a former co-leader of the BSO, which provides tuition for talented youngsters who might otherwise not have access to lessons.

Early seeds sown by the Bournemouth club are still paying dividends. In the 1920s they bought three acres of land in Swanage for £150 and used it to give disadvantaged boys seaside holidays. The Boys Camp, as it was known, was a huge success.



TOP: An early Rotary fundraiser invited people to buy a ticket to win a car worth £100

ABOVE: Former Labour Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald with Bournemouth Rotarians in 1926

Its legacy continues today in adventure and team-building activities on the same land now leased to Camden Council, and bringing the Rotary Club of Bournemouth around £30,000-a-year.

Over the decades the club has welcomed members of every major religion and nearly every political belief. Top level speakers have included past Prime Minister, Ramsey MacDonald, who was hosted by the club and its then President, Dr Fenwick in 1926.

As for being open to new ideas, minutes of meetings reveal that as long ago as 1924 they were thinking about the advantages to trade of bringing in decimal coinage.

Today, as in 1918, we are in an era of austerity and facing particular challenges. They include the desperate need for new blood. At its height the club had 150 members. Currently it has around a third of that and many are in their seventies, eighties and even nineties.

Roz Scammell, a mere youngster at 41, is convinced that together with 39-year-old president-elect Abiram Nahulasalingam (Ram to his friends) they can mount a recruiting drive that will result in a significant boost to membership and a drop in the average age.

"We are simply looking for people who really care about others and who want to make a difference. We are a humanitarian organisation," she says

Former president Maurice Patterson is convinced that Roz and Ram are a dream team. "Roz is such a capable person who thinks about things," he says. Ram, who takes over as club president in July, he describes as being "steeped in Rotary".

"I asked him if he had a vision for the club in its centenary year and he told me: 'We're celebrating 100 years I want to get 100 members' and I actually believe that is achievable." ♦

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