

Weekly Bulletin 50

Lochaber Rotary

17 March 21

Welcome to the 50th edition of our weekly newsletter. Things are improving on the Covid front and most of our members have had their vaccinations. Hopefully we can maintain this momentum, but, as Jason says almost daily on the telly, we still need to remember **FACTS**

- wear a **F**ace covering
- **A**void crowded places
- **C**lean hands and surfaces regularly
- stay **T**wo metres away from other people
- **S**elf-isolate and book a test if you have Covid symptoms (new continuous cough, fever or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste)

This week's photo of a modern and a sixties VW Beetle was taken last November outside the Land Sea & Island Centre in Arisaig Village. Courtesy of the BBC.



What we know now (that we didn't know 50 weeks ago!)

Richard Baxter

As we reach the fiftieth edition of this weekly update, I want to say thank you to Ken for putting it together week by week and to everyone who has contributed. A year on from the start of lockdown there are a number of things we have all learned.

Firstly, we can stay in touch, even under restrictions. This newsletter has been part of that, of course. So too have the zoom meetings that we have been sharing week by week. The numbers prepared to brave the technology and who manage to take part at least some of the time has risen. While we have not had as many speakers or events as in previous years, I feel that I know my fellow Rotarians much better after a year of chats and catch-ups than I did at the start.

Secondly, the world does not stop. So many of our regular activities have been impossible, including our weekly lunches and many fundraising events, but we have still been able to make some things happen - the Knitivity project was an outstanding success, for example. We have not been able to run most of our competitions, but we have still supported young people in a range of ways, most recently with music tuition and development opportunities.

Thirdly, holding on for the world to rediscover normal doesn't work. Remember all those discussions about how soon we would be back meeting in the Alex? They seem a long time ago now. Back to normal isn't going to happen, even when restrictions ease. We'll probably mix in-person and online events in new ways in future, not return to exactly what we did before. Over the lockdown months we have coped without most of the formality that can sometimes surround Rotary events, and the world didn't end, so maybe we've learned to be a bit more flexible in our approach.

Finally, we discovered that we still do things better together than we ever do on our own. The core principles of Rotary have always reflected that, of course, but I know how much I have appreciated our get-togethers, some of the off-beat conversations we have shared and the frequent laughter in our zoom meetings. All those things have made life during lockdown better, so thank you!

A year ago, I didn't know how to film and edit a video, run a zoom meeting, organise a YouTube channel, print labels from a mailing list, or put aspects of my work (including pastoral work) online. I didn't even know I would ever need to know! I'm sure you could make your own list of the new things you know now, or the skills you have developed in that time. What gives me hope for the future of our club is exactly that adaptability, that willingness to work together and to learn together which has been an unavoidable part of the last year. It will be great to share each other's company and work together in person again when that happens, but in the meantime thanks for your ongoing support for the aim of Rotary and peace, the world over. Best wishes, Richard

.....another excellent attendance, 16 members, at **last week's lunchtime meeting**

Formal business included concern from OSCR that registered charities may need to review their constitution to allow online meetings as opposed to in-person meetings. Arrangements being made to move all the Rotary material currently being stored in Sheana's attic.



General discussion was wide and varied. PE Simon having his vaccination on Thursday - stressing that it is not age-related but because he helps with mother-in-law - we believe him! Iain has been walking and Finlay looking forward to getting business running again; Ken annual Scottish Access Panels Conference and had also met



with Paul Wilson of the Snow Patrol pop group; Paul lives in Kinlochleven (but also has houses in London and Los Angeles) and Richard suggested we should invite him to join Lochaber Rotary* John from Arisaig reported all fine; currently planting 200 trees; Malcolm has had his vaccination, walking his new puppy, and installing hardwood flooring; Ian from Spean reported all well; Sheila has a blue badge now making for easier and more convenient parking; Ron still walking and cycling; notably in Glen Loy, and Gairloch; he has also been reading and enjoying George's book.

All is well with Paul who is currently planting a hedge and disturbing the frogs in difficult boggy ground conditions; also running the local Christmas Trees committee; John from Onich is dog walking and reports all quiet in Nether Lochaber; Jenny and Steve have decided to reschedule their Russian trip due to the uncertainty and the restrictions; looking forward to the fishing season reopening; George's book sales still ongoing; John from Banavie had busy week; cycling again; currently reading "Democracy for Sale" by Peter Geoghegan and recommends it to members; also active on community land issues locally; David from Torlundy busy dog walking and querying a nearby firework display celebrating Rangers' league championship! All well with Edoardo who has been participating in an online conference in India, exploring the site of the former PoW Camp at Kinlochleven and running his virtual quiz nights to raise funds for the Lochaber Food Bank. President Richard has been busy preparing for major changes in the numbers that can attend worship and church events; he visited Mossbank Care Home for the first time this year and conducted a small service for the residents;

*Response from Paul Wilson from Snow Patrol "Hi Ken, thanks for the invite. I currently have a lot on with my own charitable work at the minute and also usually live in California when things are more normal in the world. I can't at the moment, but I follow Lochaber Rotary on FB so I can be informed of events and if there's anything I can help with. Cheers, Paul

.... and a humorous postscript from Ian A, Rotarian Roamer

Well done, Ken, with Weekly Bulletin Fifty.
You've met every deadline - Now that's pretty nifty.

Thanks for keeping us all in touch.
It's certainly appreciated - very much.

Planning Officer notwithstanding, you may have missed your true station.
Ken Johnston, Ace Journalist, could have been your real Highland vocation.....

No-one will ever forget the Japanese Tsunami of 2011 when a powerful earthquake off the eastern coast of Japan caused widespread damage on land and created a series of 100' high waves that overwhelmed the country's eastern coastline and caused a major accident at a nuclear power station. It was the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in Japan, killing over 15,000 people mainly through drowning.

Just five days later, our Past-President John Hutchison, after months of planning and preparation, had been due to lead a Rotary Group Study Exchange to the Japanese district of Ibaraki - only 80 miles from the nuclear power plant.



Here, below, is John's very poignant and powerful memory of the event and his exchange of letters with his counterpart, Kiyoshi Shimizu, in Japan. It's an uplifting read.

The Japanese Tsunami of March 2011

by John Hutchison

Ten years ago, on Friday 11th March 2011, I was heading for Eigg to chair a meeting of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust when I heard of the big Tsunami in Japan. While most viewed the tragedy with human compassion yet passing interest, I was hungry for information - five days later I was due to travel there, leading Rotary District 1230's Group Study Exchange to District 2820, Ibaraki, Japan. The four team members based around Glasgow were similarly concerned.

We knew that Ibaraki Prefecture was some 120 miles from Sendai which seemed to be point on the mainland that was closest to the epicentre. We would also be within 80 miles of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear power plant.

By the time I got back from Eigg on the Saturday and was washing my neck before the Rotary Safari Supper that evening, the extent of the infrastructure damage was apparent. I simply couldn't connect with my usual contact Kiyoshi Shimizu but it was clear by the Monday that we had to cancel.

Usefully, we have a daughter who is a senior chemical engineer in the nuclear industry who was able to glean quality information about the ongoing measurement of radiation risk.

While we assumed that the exchange was simply cancelled, by September we were invited to plan to go the following year. As Rotarians may be aware, these GSE visits were designed to coincide with district conferences but, more important for the

Japanese, they were keen to have us there for the cherry blossom - Sakura - the main festival in Japan. We went in 2012, exactly a year later.

So last Thursday I wrote to Kiyoshi in suitable terms, to mark the anniversary and to assure him that I would be having an appropriate (Japanese) dram later that day, remembering his fellow Japanese and Rotarians in his district. He replied as follows:

"Good morning John-san.

I opened my mail box this morning and found mail with photographs sent by you. It give me so big surprise and feeling of happiness for me. Thank you very so much for your warm heart for me always and that your thoughts are with me as one of Japanese brother. I would like to give your warmest regards from all Rotarians in Ibaraki.

I remember the Tsunami of 2011, March 11th that has left big damages to people, still on the way to reconstruction now. TV broadcastings is about records of Tsunami damage including accident of nuclear power generation plant of Fukushima 1 of TEPCO these past week in order for people to remember and not forget it.

Enjoy Japanese whiskies for your drink. I think Japanese whiskies maker will thank you indeed.

Hoping too that you and your family are safe and well and please give my regards to your Rotarians. I am looking forward to hear from you again. Thank you again.

Who calls himself Japanese brother, Kiyoshi Shimizu.

With that I had the dram - Slàinte / Kampai! Best wishes from Kiyoshi and the Hitachinaka Rotary Club to you all."

