HISTORY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF OAK BAY

Compiled by Perry Bamji with assistance from David Sills

*With thanks to the late **Len Lane**. The early section (up to 1994) is gleaned from an address he made on the occasion of the Club's 20th Anniversary Dinner, December 20, 1994 at the Laurel Point Inn.*

Monday **May 13, 1974** saw the organizational meeting of the club at the Uplands Golf Course. Present at the meeting was the Rotary International President for 1974, William Carter, who just happened to be in the area. Three weeks later, the venue was moved to the Oak Bay Beach Hotel, and the meeting time set to Noon on Tuesdays. The official recognition that the club had become part of Rotary International was received on **July 24, 1974**. The Charter Night meeting was held on **October 19, 1974** with 22 charter members in attendance. District Governor, Bob Brewster, presented the charter to the Club's first president, Barney Simmons. Among the charter members were Deans (D.P.) Peggs (father of Joan Peggs), Bruce Walker (father of Kevin Walker), and Ray Rawnsley (Neil's father). At that meeting, the club received the first banner by a visiting Rotarian from the Retford Club in Nottingham, England. This is one of several banners the club has received to date.

Our Charter Members (* Founding Directors) in 1974

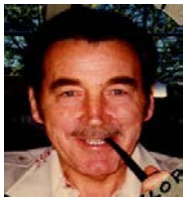
John Ansell*

Les Bird *

Geoffrey Ellis

James Easterbrook

Dr. John Emerson



Floyde Fairclough

John Harris

Andrew Hersey

Spence Pawsey

DP Deans Peggs

Our Charter Members (* Founding Directors) in 1974

Raymond Rawnsley

Rev Neil Robinson*

Barney Simmons *

Gerald Sullivan

David Titterton

Bruce Walker

Glenn Wall *

Conrad Watling *

Victor Wilson

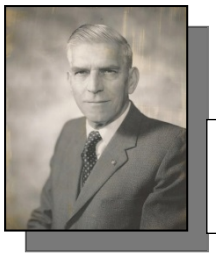
On **October 28, 1974,** the first Club Assembly was held. The luncheon cost was $3. This was raised two months later to $3.75. The first termination of membership occurred due to *poor attendance and non-payment of dues* at this time.

The Club's first project took place on **March 11, 1975,** when the club members built four picnic tables in Uplands Park at a cost of $300. Six were proposed, but after a letter of complaint to President John Ansell that the tables could lead to destruction of rare native plants in Cattle Point, only four were built and installed.

On **January 25, 1976**, the Club welcomed its first Exchange Student, Kathy Igoe from Australia. She now lives in Lilydale in the state of Victoria

In **February, 1978**, signs were erected on the Pat Bay Highway (near the race track) and on the Trans Canada Highway (near Goldstream Park) advertising the meeting days and times of all local Clubs.

Deans (D.P.) Peggs was appointed District Governor for **1978-1979**.



Deans (DP) Peggs
District Governor 1978 - 1979

The Club donated a 12-passenger van to the Oak Bay Police Department for the purpose of transporting youth to various school and sporting events. A successful fund-raiser ($3775.60) was a raffle, the prize for which was a round-trip to Australia.

On **July 23, 1979**, the members met aboard the SS Robertson II, with a Harbour Cruise thrown in.

On **September 13, 1979** the 43 Club members coughed up $10 each to erect a sign informing the public of the historical importance of the John Tod House on Heron Street. It was unveiled on February 24, 1980, Rotary International's 75th birthday. Mayor Watts and MLA Brian Smith were in attendance. The idea for the plaque came from past-president, Nels Granewall.

March 1980 saw three events:

- D.P. Peggs achieved Pioneer status after 20 years in Rotary.
- Three tape recorders were purchased and sent to Israel.
- The luncheon cost increased to $6.50

A Casino Night was held **November 6, 1981** which saw a profit of more than $2,500. In 1984, the Club joined forces with the Victoria Club to hold what was to be, according to Len Lane, *the greatest Casino bonanza of all times.* It was, however, a bit of a disaster, raising only $854. Reasons for the disaster were: there was a Casino nearby, a hugely important hockey game was on, and the City of Victoria experienced the worst rainfall it had seen in years.

Some of the luncheon venues the meetings were held in in the early years included: UVic, Pearson College, Jack Lee's Chinese Village, the Racquet Club, the Yacht Club, Panda Restaurant, the Ramada inn, and Brentwood Bay.

Organizations receiving financial help in the early eighties included:

George Pearkes Centre (a play-learning centre; $2167; 1982)
Geriatric Centre (purchase of a van; $3000; 1984)
Gerontology Association ($1000; 1984)
Juan de Fuca Hospital (Wheel Chair)
Bursaries to Oak Bay Senior Citizens to take courses.
Cash Donations to Operation Eyesight and the Salvation Army
Sale of Cookbooks (*Among Friends*) for R.I.'s Polio Plus Campaign

The Tenth Anniversary meeting was held on **October 19, 1984**, with President Nels Granewall presiding.

On **June 17, 1986,** one member paid for his lunch in quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies.

In **May 1989**, a Bicycle Safety Rodeo was held at Monterey School, arranged by Jamie Stevenson.

THE NINETIES AND ONWARDS.

Oak Bay Rotary and Harbourside combined forces to improve the lookout at King George Terrace. It was officially opened on **February 8, 1990** by Mayor Susan Bryce. The Club donated $3000.

The Peter Pan Water Park Project at Carnarvon Park was opened in **July 1991** by Mayor Dianne Butler. This followed many weekends of toil and sweat by Club members.

1993-94 - The First female Club President was Helen Beirnes

1993-94
Helen Beirnes - First woman President of our Club

July 24, 2003 was declared Rotary Day in Oak Bay by Mayor Chris Causton in recognition of the work done by the Oak Bay Rotary Club in the community.

2004: Oak Bay Teen Centre and Skateboard Area named the **Rotary Teen Area** in recognition of the donations both in time and money towards this area by the Oak Bay Rotary Club.

In **2005-2006** Joan Firkins (second female Club President) was District Governor for District 5020.

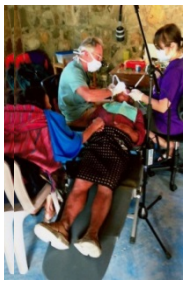
Joan Firkins – District Governor 2005 -2006

In **November, 2006,** the meeting venue moved to the Oak Bay Recreation Centre after the closure of the Oak Bay Beach Hotel.

In **2009,** as a fundraiser for Polio Plus, the club sold a handy pocket booklet of graces - **"Giving Thanks"** – The booklet was compiled by Perry Bamji and over $2,500 was collected through sale of this booklet to club members.

A collection
of
Graces and Invocations
for
all occasions contributed by
Rotarians from several countries

In **2012** our club received District 5020's **Floyd Olson International Club of the Year Award** for five International Services Projects that we successfully completed in 2011 – 2012. President Joan Peggs and International Director Perry Bamji accepted this award at a District 5020 Dinner in Victoria BC.



Guatemala **Rwanda** **Mexico** **India** **Malawi**

Floyd Olson International Club of the Year Award
International Services Projects executed in 2011 -2012

- **Guatemala** – Portable Dental Equipment
- **Rwanda** – Fuel-efficient Eco Stoves
- **Mexico** – Toilets and Septic Tanks for a school
- **India** – Toilets and Septic Tanks for villages
- **Malawi** –Water pump & storage tank for a girls School

In **July, 2013**, the meeting venue moved back to the newly constructed Oak Bay Beach Hotel on Beach Drive.

In 2014 PDG Joan Firkins received the prestigious **Rotary Foundation's Distinguished Service Award**.

Joan Firkins (Right) receiving the award from Assistant Governor Lorna

In 2014 the following three members were recognized for their meritorious services to the club. **Brian Lamb** (39 Years), **David Sills** (31 Years), and **George Pritchard** (31 Years).

(Left to Right)
David Sills
(31 Years)
***
Brian Lamb
(39 Years)
***
George Pritchard
(31 Years)

In 2014 the following ten club members were named as **Founding Members of the Paul Harris Society:** Heather Aked, Perry Bamji, Bill Burns, Joan Firkins, Peter Lawrie, Tav Macpherson, Lynne Murray, Joan Peggs, Vicky Pitt and Steve Sharlow.

Founding Members from our Club of the Paul Harris Society (2014)
Left to right - Vicky Pitt, Joan Peggs, Peter Lawrie, Lynne Murray, Joan Firkins, Perry Bamji, Heather Aked, Bill Burns, Steve Sharlow, (District Governor Michael Procter), Tav Macpherson (At the podium)

In **October 2014** our club held its very first **Paul Harris Fellow Community Recognition Dinner** when the club named the following three citizens for their outstanding services in Victoria and elsewhere. **Maria Consolvo, Helen Hughes** and **Paul Destrooper.** In the same year we also named **Steven Wong as a PHF.**

DG Michael Procter

Maria Consalvo, Paul Destrooper, Helen Hughes

PP Neil Rawnsley

PP Peter Lawrie & Steven Wong

President Jim Force

MC – PP Perry Bamji

First Paul Harris Fellow Community Recognition Dinner – October 2014

On **October 21, 2014** our Club celebrated its 40th Anniversary with a luncheon and speeches by several people. A short video entitled **"Celebrating 40 Years"** was researched and produced by **Perry Bamji** with assistance from photo archivist **David Sills.**

Our second Paul Harris Community Awards Dinner was held in April 2016. The awardees were Dr. Tania Miller, Musical Director of Victoria Symphony, Dr. Bob McDonald, Host of CBC Radio - Quirks and Quarks and Councillor Hazel Braithwaite

L to R Tania Miller, Bob McDonald, Hazel Braithwaite

Compiler's Note: Some of our history is missing. If you have information, corrections, or know of members' names that are missing or spelled incorrectly, please email Perry Bamji - p.bamji@quensu.ca