



PROJECT 74

In the summer of 1970 the members felt that a definite Project ought to be launched to commemorate the Club's Golden Jubilee Year in 1974 and as a consequence a supper party was held in the Rotary Room where a Committee was formed under the permanent chairmanship of Rotarian Vivian Moon. The new Committee held its first meeting on 31st July, 1970.

The first problem was to decide who to help—the aged, infirm and handicapped, youth, or to contribute to sports by providing a specific part of the new Sports Centre. Many propositions covering these fields were carefully considered. The most positive one was that the Chairman should contact the Mayor whom it was felt would be the best authority to consult for guidance. The meeting with the Mayor (Alderman Guy Casey) proved to be an exceptionally wise move as he suggested that his Council were keen to convert the pasture field in front of Pilton House as a Rest Garden for the elderly, but it was impossible, through lack of funds, to do this.

The Committee welcomed this suggestion and felt that it would not only be a permanent commemoration to the Club's Jubilee, but would enrich the amenities of the town. On the understanding that the Parks Department would take over the Garden once it had been laid out and formally handed over, it was decided to pursue this idea and consequently Project 74 was born.

The next problem was how much it was going to cost and how the money could be raised and at one of the frequent meetings which were being held very regularly no fewer than 30 suggestions were made.

An editorial appeared in the "North Devon Journal-Herald" as did a half page advertisement stating the aims of the Club and the reception given by the general public confirmed that the Project would receive popular support.

Messrs. Waterers were retained to submit a landscape layout and Rotarian Blackwell agreed a Deed of Dedication with the Town Clerk to ensure the perpetuity of the Garden.

The first fund raising scheme was held in October, 1970, and took the form of a Race Nite with dancing at the Woolacombe Bay and this proved to be a great success and raised the first £100.

A special Project 74 fund was created and registered with the Charity Commissioners and a 200 Club (after considerable differences of opinion) was formed at a membership of £12 per annum with regular weekly draws. This proved to be a marvellous money spinner and by January, 1971, £1,000 had been made from the 200 Club and £260 net profit from other efforts. Special social evenings were held when the four £250 Draws arranged each year were made, and this, apart from supplementing income, did much to improve fellowship and acquaintances. There was quite a divergence of views as to £250 being transferred from the Charity Account to the Project 74 Account, but this was eventually carried through Past President Courtney's continual insistence.

The crunch then came: a £10,000/£12,000 estimate from Waterers and doubts were expressed as to the Project's feasibility.

The Project 74 Committee, however, who were still loaded with enthusiasm, having set their sights on a particular scheme, were not to be daunted and consideration was given to leasing with the Corporation. This represented a much more modest layout with the Corporation providing direct labour and using the site as a "hospital job", and after a meeting with the Borough Surveyor's Department, the Project proceeded on that basis.

President's Night in October 1971, under President John Huxtable, was the first occasion that the 200 Club members attended and their inclusion provided a record attendance with a further £43 being made from the Draw.

It was becoming increasingly obvious to the Club that despite the economies made, much effort was still needed to raise funds, and as a consequence various other social evenings were held regularly. The Inner Wheel played a very important and valuable part and individual Rotarians held private cocktail parties, donated the sale proceeds of "game they had shot" or "flowers and vegetables they had sold" to the Project Committee. The 200 Club, although becoming more difficult each year, was still in operation and contributed greatly towards the Committee's efforts.

Reluctantly the Committee decided to drop the scented garden which was to be laid out for the enjoyment of the blind, but fortunately Barnstaple Lions Club stepped in to undertake this commitment, and the Rotary Club are indebted to them for their co-operation and

support. The Corporation fenced and drained the site, laid on water and electricity, and also laid the terraced footpaths. They also donated an attractive pair of iron gates which originated from the Cattle Market and built a very imposing entrance of stone engraved with the words "Rotary Garden". The Parks Superintendent, Arthur Cole, took an immense interest and the Club are indebted to him, for his individual efforts and those of Mr. Chaffe of the Surveyor's Department.

In July 1973 Rotarian Blatchford, who had taken over from Rotarian Bradford as the Committee's Treasurer, both of whom did stalwart service for the fund, reported that since July 1970 when the fund had started, the Committee had raised £4,605 net profit, but in view of the Jubilee Programme envisaged, considerable concern was expressed whether the Committee would be able to complete its objective.

Ambitious arrangements for the actual Jubilee Celebrations, when the Garden was to be handed over to the Local Authority, were soon shattered, and the Royal Marines Band and the R.A.F. fly-past ideas were quickly dismissed. About this time, the Lions Club too, had a shock in that the £750 they had budgeted for the scented garden looked like being £1,500, and they were beginning to think again. Worries and doubts crept back into the Club, particularly when it was known that the Pergola Shelter planned to seat about 20 was to cost £1,200 and the Water Garden had to be enlarged with a pro-rata increase in costs. A new Value Added Tax together with rampant inflation further aggravated the problem and the outlook seemed bleak. Plans were made for the Garden to be opened on 23rd May. This was to be "The Day", starting with a Church Service at Pilton Church, conducted by Rotarian Jim West. Cocktails in marquees to be erected at the Garden, and a Rotary lunch and a tea for the old folks in the afternoon, prior to the Garden being actually handed over. This arrangement subsequently fell through because of the prohibitive cost of the marquees and the venues were altered to N.D. Motel for lunch and Pilton House for tea. It was decided to hold a Banquet on the following evening, 24th, when the National President of R.I.B.I. John Edwards, would be invited to be the main speaker. It was hoped that the Lord Bishop of Crediton would be able to address the Rotary lunch on the Thursday, which he agreed to do. It was also decided that our twin Club, Helmond, should be guests at all the functions. The Project then began more than ever to take the form of a Club affair and the Community Service Committee, under the chairmanship of Rotarian Derek Bradford, was made responsible for the Old Folks' Tea in the afternoon, the International Committee under the

chairmanship of Rotarian Eric Lindsay agreed to lay on a programme to entertain the Dutch Rotarian guests, and Club Service under the chairmanship of First Vice-President Geoffrey Pendlebury was to be responsible for the Banquet.

The Club were most fortunate in having sympathetic Presidents during the Project. It ought to be mentioned that the idea was conceived in Past President Leslie Orgar's Year 1969/70 and this interest and enthusiasm from the top continued under Presidents Bill Pokoj, John Huxtable, Douglas Blackwell, and the Jubilee President Vivian Moon, whose personal dedication, exuberant energy, and determination, overcame every difficulty.

It would be an impossible task to thank everyone who contributed so much, but undoubtedly the Club are most grateful to: the Mayors of Barnstaple, Alderman Guy Casey, Councillor Keith Abraham, and Councillor Douglas Porter, and their Corporation, in particular the Borough Surveyor's Department, for their enormous and very substantial help and co-operation; the Inner Wheel for their regular support; and the 200 Club representing many members of the public who were not Rotarians but financially supported the scheme annually throughout, and attended the many money raising functions; the Lions Club for their interest and assistance; and the other organizations who kindly donated seats—the National Farmers' Union Harvest Festival Service; Round Table; the Carnival Committee; Pilton Women's Institute; an anonymous Rotarian; and two from the Inner Wheel. A statute has been promised by our twin-Club of Helmond.

A total of £6,591 has been raised and the financial projection has indicated all will be square at the end of the day.

Whilst the original concept was ultra-ambitious for a Rotary Club of Barnstaple's size and undoubtedly considerable headaches were suffered throughout, the actual involvement of the members in the activities they were suffering did much to create a bond of fellowship and goodwill between them. With such a strong common cause, acquaintances became friends through working together in the knowledge that the old folk of the town had a Garden created especially for them. The Rotary Club of Barnstaple was in great spirit at the end of its 90th Year.