

## Rotary Club of Romsey Test

### Breakfast Meeting Minutes – 12 October 2022

14 members enjoyed the usual hospitality and excellent breakfast at the Youth in Romsey HQ.

President Nigel introduced David Sutton who recounted the anecdotes that his father had written describing his time in the Auxiliary (later National) Fire Service in Southampton during WWII.

The start had been inauspicious – while waiting to be interviewed he spotted a fire extinguisher and thought it might increase his chance of being selected if he learned how it worked. The instructions said it needed to be turned upside down – this he did and the extinguisher “went off” in a spray of foam. Despite this he was recruited and equipped with uniform and axe. The fire engine was an ancient Sunbeam, chain drive, outside “gate” gear change, crew sitting on top alongside the ladders. A big change from having ridden a motorbike and driven a small car.

David told us about his father’s experiences of dealing with many warehouse and factory fires in and around Southampton involving ankle-deep melted butter, lino and cigarettes (that were mysteriously liberated). There was a fire at the gasworks fought with water filling a bomb crater (the “water” in light of day was found to have been raw sewage) and one in a more rural location at a thatched cottage in Timsbury in weather so cold that the hoses froze solid. It was hazardous work but interspersed with many humorous moments which David recounted. After D-day and a spell at a storage depot where now-redundant fire-fighting equipment was stored and creative accounting of the inventory was used, his father then returned to his civilian work in the wine trade. He spoke very little about his wartime experiences so the written anecdotes had been an unexpected find.

After thanking David for filling the gap in the programme, Nigel noted that last Monday he had been invited by the Friends of Romsey Hospital to represent Rotary when Countess Mountbatten had planted a memorial tree in the garden of the hospital. Rotary were invited because of our funding and construction of the entrance canopy to the hospital to mark the millennium.

Next Rotary meeting is a presentation by Charlotte Anthony of Romsey Young Carers about the work that they do. The meeting will be attended by members of the group of Community Service supporters that Nikki Jones has recruited. Nigel asked us to please welcome them as potential new members.

Room Prep: Steve George and Clive Daley (Grace)

Minutes: Ian Bullivant

Meeting closed at 9am.

John Gould (standing in for Clive Collier)