

## Meeting Notes 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021 – Royal British Legion

On 28 July the Rotary Club of Romsey Test resumed normal face-to-face meetings for the first time for many months. They also met for the first time at a new venue, the Royal British Legion. Members were welcomed by the new President, Roget Shepherd, who made special mention of two guests, Neil Gwynne, our speaker for the night, and Ron Bowater, a potential new member. After a fine two-course dinner we were addressed by the speaker. He advised that is chair of a new group which had been formed in Romsey only last Sunday called Wilder Romsey. This turned out not to be about introducing more night clubs into the town, but is an umbrella organisation designed to draw together the many groups already working in different ways in Romsey to improve the environment. The new group has four aims:

1. To draw together the various groups working in this field and get them talking to each other.
2. To provide a place for volunteers to join in with the work to improve and maintain the natural environment.
3. To raise funds to enable projects to be developed.
4. To form a Facebook group which will help to spread the message and attract further volunteers to the cause.

Neil went on to explain that they would develop different sub-groups of volunteers to work on specific projects in the town, such as a group to improve the Barge Canal. More information can be found at [wilderromsey@googlegroups.com](mailto:wilderromsey@googlegroups.com). Another area to be looked at was the Woodley Estate where there were many large areas of paved or tarmacked surface which would lend themselves to being turned into green spaces and planted to meadow flowers. Not only would it improve the visual appearance but it would encourage bees and other forms of wildlife to thrive. One area there is earmarked as a site for a community orchard.

They are not only about planting wild flowers. Tree planting is another objective, and there is funding available for this work, as the authorities are keen to create wooded areas that are attractive to visit to take some of the pressure off the New Forest. I was surprised to learn, as maybe others were too, that if you wish to plant wild flowers on a roadside verge instead of just grass, you need a licence. The new group is already in touch with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Group who manage the Fishlake Meadows nature reserve as they have very similar aims and objectives. The Test Valley Borough Council are also well aware of the project and are taking part. They have already had a 'No-Mo May' which they even extended beyond May. Neil is a councillor and is expected to be Mayor in 2022. The TVBC have also been involved in creating a new pond at Sherfield English. They are also involved with the Romsey Futures Group in the project to open up the stream by Dukes Mill. Look out for details of a new photographic competition, with prizes, which the new group will be launching shortly.

Why has the new group started now, was the next question answered by Neil.

1. Climate change. The more green areas and trees that we can plant the better contribution to removing carbon from the atmosphere.
2. The ecological damage being done to the planet with many species becoming endangered or extinct. This applies as much to insects as to tigers and elephants.
3. Changes to the nature of the high streets.
4. More people working from home and thus able to enjoy the environment more, and to have more time to volunteer their help.

A vote of thanks was given by Ed Holmes.

The only other business was an appeal by Walk Chair Brian Davies for all members to do their utmost to get the Walk message out as far as possible. Although many have already signed up for the walk we are about 7 weeks behind our normal position and need a big push from now.