

On 18th May 1936 an inaugural lunch of the Rotary Club of Berkhamsted presided over by the District Chairman was held at which Mr. C.M.Cox, then headmaster of Berkhamsted School was elected as its first President. Besides Berkhamsted, the Club's formation covered Northchurch, Wiggington and Potten End. It was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Hemel Hempstead which had itself been chartered just two years earlier.

Rotary International President Will R Manier formally presented the new Club's charter at a ceremony held in Kings Hall on 16th October 1936 attended by nearly 200 guests.

During WW2 the Club held a number of events to raise money for the war effort, including a recital by the internationally renowned pianist Benno Moisewitsch. The proceeds of £200 were donated to Mrs Churchill's Aid to Russia Fund. She was famously born in Berkhamsted. Fund-raising for good causes has remained a constant feature of Berkhamsted Rotary down the years.

In the early 1960s the Club in tandem with Hemel Hempstead Rotary raised money for a new Blind Centre at Two Waters Road in Hemel. The required sum (£5,000) was achieved in short order and the new building was opened in November 1961.

Around 1980 the Club organised the first Berkhamsted Half Marathon. Now in its 42nd year this event has gone from strength to strength and is today one of the most important dates in the local distance runners' calendar. In recent years it has been combined with a 5 mile fun run. In a typical year these two events raise over £15,000 for local charities, particularly the Pepper Foundation and the Hospice of St Francis. They also enable participants, last year numbering over 1700, to raise substantial sums from their sponsors for their chosen good causes.

In 1985 the Rotary clubs in Hemel, Tring and Berkhamsted agreed to sponsor a new club to meet the needs of the many commuters living in the area. So the Rotary Club of Berkhamsted Bulbourne was born. Its inaugural dinner took place at the Hertfordshire Moat House on 14th January 1986, followed by a Charter Dinner on 15th May at the Pavilion in Hemel.

Berkhamsted Rotary



Members quickly developed their own programme of community support and charitable activities. These included the raising of £40,000 towards building Sparrow Village in South Africa, a self-sufficient community for those afflicted with Aids.

In 1993 a golf day was held to raise funds for the newly established Iain Rennie Hospice at Home, now an annual event.

Over the years the two Rotary Clubs worked increasingly together, pooling resources for the Half Marathon, community and other events such as the annual schools Technology Tournament. The logic of a formal merger became inescapable and this was consummated in 2009, adopting the charter date of the senior club but taking the name Rotary Club of Berkhamsted Bulbourne.

Since then, its annual programme of events has steadily expanded as other local service clubs have ceased to operate. These include the annual fireworks party and Santa's sleigh.

The surplus earned from all its activities last year enabled Berkhamsted Rotary to donate £65,500 to more than 40 local and international charities.

Alongside its fund-raising, the Club continues to play a full part in various civic events such as the Festival of Lights and Community Awards, outings for disabled children and the elderly and competitions for local schools, such as Young Artists, Young Chef, and Young Photographer. More recent initiatives include a Humanitarian Relief Day for 6th formers from Ashlyns and Berkhamsted Schools and the collection of unwanted or distressed musical instruments for the Dacorum Music School's instrument library.

Collections of unwanted tools are made for two local charities who refurbish them and make up kits to assist start up enterprises in Africa. Support is regularly provided to those affected by natural disasters

Berkhamsted Rotary continues to attract new members keen to play their part and share in the enjoyment of working together to help fellow citizens at home and abroad - all in the spirit of *Service Above Self*.