



# PRIDE OF LIONS

DG Alastair Joel

Issue 1 • July 2020 – District 105A News

## Our Covid-19 Experiences

[www.lions105a.org.uk](http://www.lions105a.org.uk) • [info@lions105a.org.uk](mailto:info@lions105a.org.uk)



## My life seemed to stop.... I just couldn't get going

Imagine not being naturally fearless, but doing a parachute jump for charity or delivering countless Meals on Wheels year after year, or attending countless District Conventions and Zone Quizzes, or being part of Community Voluntary Service (CVS) and driving elderly people to appointments and visits. Now, think about what it must have been like to go from so much involvement, to a national pandemic lockdown.

**Lion Dave Upson**, a member of **Letchworth Garden City and Baldock Club** has been on a long journey of service from being in Boys Brigade at age 7 and working through all the ranks to getting The Queen's Badge (the highest award in the Brigade) to joining Lions. With Lions he served as President for 4 years in Baldock Lions and another 7 years in the amalgamated Letchworth and Baldock Lions in over 31 years of Lionism.

His initial feeling of loss was a result of having no physical club meeting to attend, no active way to serve and not many outreach programmes still in operation. He would sit and watch the television and miss seeing his siblings. However, since lockdown Lion Dave has been doing a 2 to 3 day walk each week, checking in on the Club's WhatsApp group chat

daily, taking part in the online zoom meetings – especially the social ones and he has received many calls from clients he has given lifts to over the years, asking about his welfare, for a change.

His Lion's heart still swells with pride and his spirit is lifted especially as he can now get out a bit more and drop people places.

His top tips for times such as these are: Keep going and you will get more out of life. Don't sit about "that's dangerous," go out and get some exercise, get sunlight – even if it is just while reading, don't go into yourself so much – talk to people and even take pride in doing the housework or washing up. Now, having reengineered himself, having found other ways to touch people's lives, imagine being able to say "I am enjoying my life."

**Letchworth and Baldock Lions Club**



## A Virtual Handover

Since April **London Central Host Lions Club**, the first LC in British Isles has been meeting every month very successfully.... Virtually.

Meetings are arranged on ZOOM App conducted by Club President from his home computer and all members are

connected from their homes by devices or tablets. Attendance in these meetings have been very high, almost 90% and business is conducted quickly.

Our new DG Alastair's year started with virtual visits to Clubs for installing New Officers in Clubs. On 2nd July he along with his partner Lion Gemma virtually visited our Club to install new President Lion Manji Kara, Secretary PP Lion Vijay Jain and Treasurer PP Lion Kiran Shah. The ceremony was held at IPP Lion Pareshe Modasia's place, keeping proper social distance and our DG and all other members joined from their respective homes.

Virtual Meetings is now regular way of Lions Clubs Meetings and I am sure this is future.

Picture shows Incoming President Lion Manji Kara with PP Lion Vijay Jain (Secretary) on left and IPP Lion Pareshe Modasia on right.

**Lion Vijay Jain**



## NOTICE BOARD

This year's theme for the Peace Poster Contest is 'Peace Through Service'. This theme perfectly demonstrates our Clubs' commitment to serving the local community. We have seen Lions across the world take up the challenge in serving the community, especially with food for front line workers and vulnerable persons. The competition is open for 11 to 13 year old students as of November 15. MDHQ will have kits available at a cost of £14 as soon as possible. **The Poster entries submission deadline is 15 November 2020.**

For further information: Lion Maria Sgouralis on email [mzgouralis@outlook.com](mailto:mzgouralis@outlook.com)



**Kindness and Diversity**

**LCI Purposes:**  
To Organize, charter and supervise service clubs to be known as Lions clubs.

# Keeping active: physically and spiritually

I am PDG Lion Dr Surjit Singh Bhalla, celebrating 47 years as a member of **Southall Lions Club**, and 37 years as a Past District Governor. I was amongst the high-risk people who have had to self-isolate from 23 March 2020, initially for three months but which lasted till 31 July 2020.

In January 2020 I had already signed up with the British Lifeboat Association for the 1000-mile challenge, to be completed within a year. Self-isolation helped me to continue my regime of walking an average of 5 miles walking daily in my garden instead of the park. As of 1 August I have completed 915 miles i.e. walked 2,068,427 steps. So, I am well on the way to completing the 1000 miles by the end of August.

For several years I have had the Sikh Holy Scriptures (Siri Guru Granth Sahib), but never seriously read it. My possession is composed of eight volumes. Professional readers would complete the Scriptures in 48 hours. It has taken me 75 hours to do a complete reciting and I have been extremely fortunate in being able to spend time reciting it in classical Punjabi with the translation in English. During the lockdown, I have completely read it twice and celebrated the final part on Zoom with my siblings and their families at their homes whilst partaking a delicious vegetarian feast in their own homes!



*Surjit reciting the Holy Scriptures*



*Surjit walking in the garden*

Zoom as a social media forum has made the world ridiculously small, in that, one was able to see and communicate not only with fellow Lions in my own Club but with people across the world. This has enriched my knowledge about humanity in general having heard and listened to how people across the world are coping with the Covid 19 pandemic.

I have also been kept busy communicating with my clients who were worried with the financial downturn of the markets and to reassure them that this was temporary and the economy will recover, albeit in a year or so; fortunately, the market is creeping up slowly. Plus I have donated approximately £1000 to various organisations for their Covid 19 work including St Bartholomew's Hospital, a Lodge in India, to friends who undertook their own challenges during lockdown (two had their head shaved off) and finally to Kings College Hospital, where with the help of my family I was able to donate £1,111.11 (with Gift Aid).

In my eyes all the NHS hospital staff are... HEROES 'NUMBER ONE.

**PDG Surjit Bhalla**

## A Tale of a Lion, Two Ladies and Selflessness

Following a request from District to help a past serving member, Lion Amarjit did not hesitate to assist. Jenny an 81-year-old lady lives in Southampton and also has a property in London. She was unable to travel given the lockdown and fell into the high category of vulnerable people who needed to isolate. Sadly, her builders left her in the lurch and their debris was added to by fly tippers which included a fridge. Although she attempted to get contractors to remove this rubbish, this was not possible due to the hazards of gas in the fridge. This was compounded by her local authority receiving residents' complaints and threatening her with fines unless she cleared the rubbish.

Lion Amarjit a member of **Fairlop Club and Zone B Chair** used his contacts to arrange for this waste to be disposed of within 2 days. Both Jenny and her daughter who resides in France were relieved and expressed their gratitude by stating that Lion Amarjit showed "evidence of the real spirit of Lionism. You have no idea how much it is helping in what is to me a very worrying time."

Mary, who is a 98 year-old is an independent woman and neighbour of Amarjit's. She wishes to continue to live independently rather than move in with her children or be put in a home, despite having broken her hip and been burgled by bogus gasmen in the past. Lion Amarjit continues to support her, along with her carers, during the pandemic to live in her maisonette which is near his shop. Our Lion delivered her medication, provided her with a cordless bell to call him for help, cleared her overgrown garden to stop problem with foxes and rats plus any maintenance work required in her house.

His business as a builder's merchant was recognised by the 2 Mayors of Bromley for two consecutive months. He received Certificates of Gratitude and Appreciation for the service to the local community during the lockdown period for supplying local schools and hospitals.



### Please note:

The quality of some of the photos in this edition is poor, please supply higher resolution pictures for use.



# Newport Pagnell and Olney Lions' Ambitious Covid-19 Support Plan

The Club learnt that LCI MD 105 was making grants available for local clubs to use, to help with the Covid pandemic. We applied for a grant and were delighted to receive it.

Using this grant, and our own funds, we put together an ambitious 'Support Plan' to support the two local Covid-19 support groups, who were tackling the Covid crisis directly – and also to support a number of other charitable causes, that were associated with the indirect impacts of the pandemic: the Bedford Foodbank, the MK Foodbank, the Scrubs 500 project and MK Act (a women's refuge).

With many of our Lions having to self-isolate, we were, unfortunately, unable to provide much physical help – though some of our members joined the two support groups, working as private citizens.

The grant, combined with amounts from our own Charity Fund, has allowed us to contribute to easing the crisis for many local people. By providing funds to help the various organisations, who are providing direct and indirect support for the victims of the crisis.

## DONATION TO THE OLNEY COVID-19 SUPPORT GROUP



*Helping with the shopping*

With the potential impact of the Coronavirus lockdown on the community, a group of local Olney people took the initiative to get together to form a team supported by Cobbs Garden Surgery, Olney Town Council, Olney is Kind and some local businesses. The team provided a range of services from shopping, friendly telephone support and running errands. The group's aim is to ensure no-one will feel totally isolated, providing direct help to around 160 self-isolators.

## DONATIONS TO NEWPORT PAGNELL COVID-19 RESPONSE GROUP



Like the Olney group, a team of volunteers has been formed to provide support and assistance to the elderly, vulnerable and those isolated during the Coronavirus Emergency. The group is HQ to a large contingent of Newport Pagnell residents whose plans are helping about 400 local people.

Their aim is to provide food and care for those who need it; to supply protective equipment to help keep people safe; to provide support to specific groups such as the very young or elderly; and, like the Olney group, ensuring that they can plan for the future and provide the continued support

that will be needed when this is all over.

This organization is also run by local volunteers and 'fronted' by the Newport Pagnell Baptist Church.

## DONATION TO BEDFORD FOODBANK

Bedford is a large county with villages which are closer to Olney than they are to Bedford – for example, Turvey. We collect funds, and have members living in some of these areas. When we heard that, like many other foodbanks, they were having difficulties in financing the needs of those who have come to rely on them, we decided to lend some support.

## DONATION TO MK FOOD BANK

The MK Food Bank relies entirely on donations of food and money from local schools, churches, businesses, organisations and individuals and every single item or penny given makes a difference. Businesses, churches and Community Groups all get involved helping The Food Bank in a variety of ways. Their warehouse and serving centres are manned by volunteers from the local area.



*MK Food Bank*

This group was also one of the ones, targeted by our Covid-19 Support Plan.

## DONATION TO SCRUB HUB 500 PROJECT

Each year, a group of musicians run an event in Milton Keynes called Togfest. Our relationship with these guys goes back many years, when one of the top folk rock bands in the area (Togmore) regularly came along to our Fiesta Folk fundraiser and helped us raise a significant amount for our charity account.

A number of our members reciprocated and have supported them over the years by crewing at Togfest. When we heard that one of the organisers of the popular music festival was involved in a project to provide Scrubs for both Milton Keynes and Northampton Hospitals, we just had to support them.

Those involved in the project either work in or are friends with employees of Impact Trading. It is a Hanslope based company that provides a wide range of corporate, hospitality, charity and other clothing using garments that as far as possible, have ethical certifications with a Fairtrade certified history.

The Coronavirus crisis had seen the company having to furlough staff and being the ethical company it is, those same staff wanted to do something which would benefit others. With the support of the company management, a project to produce 500 much needed scrubs for our two local hospitals at Northampton and Milton Keynes was set up.

Free use of the premises, equipment and an initial donation to help purchase materials enabled the team of volunteers to purchase the initial fabric etc. With the help of some friends working at home, the first batch of 500 scrubs was produced, and dispatched to the hospitals. So successful was the project that a fundraising campaign which our club contributed to, has provided funds to enable them to increase production and helping to extend the recipient base into hospices, care homes and others involved in dealing with virus victims.

*continued over...*

## DONATION TO MK ACT

MK Act is a charity in Milton Keynes which works with over 100 families every day to help them move on from fear and abuse. They have been providing safe emergency accommodation in Milton Keynes for women and their children escaping domestic violence for over 40 years.

Newport Pagnell & Olney Lions have received a communication about domestic violence which states that, due to the 'lockdown', there are already signs of a surge in cases across the UK in the last two weeks with helplines having seen a huge increase in demand and 9 people have been killed. We are pleased therefore, to make a donation to this wonderful charity.

**Lion Trevor Aldred**

## Fund Raising for Macmillan Cancer Support

On Sunday 21 June Lion Vijay Jain of **London Central Host Lions Club** organized a virtual Bollywood Songs event to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support, in memory of his wife Kalpana, victim of Cancer.

Each Year Lion Vijay arranges a Macmillan Coffee Morning but due to Coronavirus lockdown it was not possible this year. Hence he thought of organizing this Event which was streamed on Zoom very successfully. London's prominent Bollywood Singers Veda Mellan and Sreejith Sridharan kindly agreed to be main singers and they were supported by friendly singers Sudipta from Sheffield, Smita and Aashna from Mumbai and Bhanu from Chennai.

The show started promptly at 2pm UK time with a short speech by President Elect Lion Manji Kara and very ably conducted by PCC Lion Viresh Paul from his house. Viewers were from U.K., India and U.S.A. There were requests from viewers to sing particular songs which were fulfilled by our singers. During whole programme which lasted three hours full protocol of Lockdown was maintained. The Event ended with vote of thanks by Lion Nilesh Palan.

Donations from viewers are being received which will be presented to Macmillan Cancer Support as for the last four years.

**LC of London Central Host**



## Training in the Zoom Era

As a result of the lockdown we have all become accustomed to using platforms like Zoom, not just for communicating with club members and our families, but also learning and attending training webinars.

In fact, as a District we were one of the first to acquire our own license for using Zoom and have been using it now fairly extensively. This year's incoming officers' seminar which would normally have taken place on one Sunday at a hotel in the middle of the District was conducted over three separate sessions which every one of the incoming officers could attend. Not surprisingly we had a fantastic turnout with some of the sessions attracting over 40 members! All found the experience fairly comfortable to get used to and for added value they have been able to watch the seminars again as everyone was provided access to the recording – now available on our website under members area and training.

Given these advantages, including the fact that we could hold these on a date to suit us rather than the hotel and their availability and members do not have to travel, we have come to the conclusion that of our training programme will henceforth be using Zoom as extensively as possible.

Zone Chairs, for instance, now have also had their training session on Zoom and their training is continuing with regular 45

minute briefings which would not have been possible if not for the use of Zoom.

By the time you read this you may or may not have attended the first monthly training session which is on the subject of Social Media. This is being presented by a Lion member from a different district who also does not have to travel down to our District to present the training. At the time of writing this article, 26 members had already registered and I'm expecting the attendance to go well over 50.

There is in fact a full programme of training as last year with the training sessions taking place on a monthly basis. The second one on 6 September, for instance, will be on Chairing Meetings. This is open to all Lions as are all of our webinars except one or two specific ones. In the latter category, I include the forthcoming webinar on the subject of Mentoring. This is being run by International Director Geoff Leeder and will be useful to those Lions who are happy to become Mentors to new Lions in their own clubs or as mentors to other clubs but will require a recommendation from the DG team.

In the following month we will be running a session on CIOs. This will also be run by somebody from outside our District – Linda Picton – who will go through the benefits of incorporating as a CIO and deal with the practical aspects including the role of trustees and other issues that CIO clubs need to be aware of.



Then in November, I should be running a session on the Quality Club Initiative. This was run for the first time last year and attracted a small group of dedicated Lions who felt it was so useful that it should be taken back to each club. Clearly that was not possible but hopefully by doing it online we will be able to get all the clubs if not most logging in and reaping the benefit of this very exciting programme launched by Lions Clubs International.

Then in December we will have a session on Membership followed by one on Service activities in January and then in February a session on Making Meetings Interesting. Full details of these and the workshops for April, May and June of next year will be made available shortly.

Do look out for the invitations to register for the online training which will come through the district mail out system and try and register as soon as you receive the invites. All of these zoom meetings and webinars have a limited attendance. If the programme start becoming popular then admittance will be on a first come first serve basis. So do look out for the emails and try and book as soon as you receive the details.

If anyone would like me to run any additional training all you have to do is get in touch with me and we can put something on for you specifically for your club if necessary or a zone at any time to suit you.

**PCC Viresh Paul**

**District GAT – Leadership Coordinator**



# DG Alastair's Adventures



Welcome to my first newsletter for this Lionistic year. It is my honour and pleasure to serve as your District Governor for this year.

My strapline for the year is *'Without Challenge there is no achievement'*. When planning the year back in January, little did I know that Covid 19 would be the biggest Challenge that we would face.

Normally this newsletter would be full of pictures from the International Convention and the handover. Despite Covid 19, Singapore suffered severe flooding at the end of June and only 6 of us were allowed to meet inside for the handover... Instead I have spent my life on Zoom. Whilst this has cut down on the miles travelled and hours just sat on the M25, it has enabled me to attend up to 3 meetings in one evening! Both Kamal and I hope to be able to hold an official handover at some point this year, please be patient and watch this space.

Gemma and I have attended two virtual clubs meetings and a face to face Zone and club meeting (maintaining social distancing). Thank you for the warm welcome we have received both physically and virtually. As Clubs find different ways to carry on during lock down, the important factor is to stay in touch with our family of fellow Lions, many of whom look forward to regular club meetings.

I have set the District some goals for the coming year, rather than fill this entire article with them, I will mention a few each month.

Membership is a huge topic, with many aspects and lots of work. To that end I have split the District into two. Lion Mick Claxton taking the west and PDG Kamal the East. They are keen to work together in supporting the Clubs and Zones. Despite the difficulties that we are facing the only way to build our district membership is to form new clubs. We shall be looking to work with housebuilders to form a partnership. Converting our club branches to full clubs will be encouraged too.

New members to our association will receive orientation, within 3 months of joining. This will be in the form of a recorded webinar initially, and there are the new member booklets too. Working alongside membership is Leadership. This is being headed by PCC Viresh. There is a programme of training planned for each month, and these are on Zoom and are on a variety of topics. Should there be a topic that

you feel we should run a session on please contact Viresh [glt@lions105a.org](mailto:glt@lions105a.org)

My thanks go to Viresh, Satnam and Steve for their hard work in organising and running the Incoming officers and Zone Chair training. This was the first virtual training we had run in 105A and was well attended. If you missed any of these sessions, they are available to watch from the district website.

Throughout Lockdown, Lions continue to serve in many ways, whether by providing food and drink for food cupboards and soup kitchens, meals and scrubs for the NHS, or just helping those in their local communities who have been self-isolating. We are doing what do best and why we joined... which is **'To Serve'**.

There will be many non-Lions who have helped out in their local communities over the past months. My challenge to you is to convert these potential members into Lions. Doreen is continuing the challenge as Service lead for the District. A service newsletter will be published quarterly, highlighting successes and sharing ideas to our members. There are many worthy projects and events, along with individuals who go above and beyond. I want to celebrate these successes and recognise those who have achieved. How nice would it be to be recognised by a fellow Lion. Please let me know of your successes.

I welcome my cabinet officers and thank them for accepting the challenge of their role, many of whom are new this year. Please consider inviting the officers to your meetings. They would all welcome the chance to showcase their subject.

I am surrounded by women this year and am delighted to work with Karanjeet as 1st VDG and Kav as 2nd VDG. We meet regularly (again on Zoom!). We are keen to support you and your clubs by attending your meetings—just ask!

The most important lady in my life is of course Gemma (sorry mum!). For this year she has chosen Brain Tumour Research as her charity. Gemma is more than happy to speak at your meeting on the subject and support any fundraising that you may have planned in the future.

Till next time, stay safe and well.

Email: [alastairjoel@lionsclubs.co.uk](mailto:alastairjoel@lionsclubs.co.uk)

DG Alastair

## MY DIARY July 2020

Isolating at home, communicating with Lions by digital means and phone calls.

## Share Your Story

We're looking for Lions to share their personal experience about how they faced the challenge posed by Covid-19. This can cover, for example:

- you had a mild dose of Covid19
- looked after someone with this virus

- had to cancel a celebration
- dealt with demise of a loved one
- how you dealt with the self-isolation restrictions
- carried out a service activity i.e. became a befriender, delivered medication or helped out at a foodbank to helping a vulnerable person

Please email your story to [pro@lions105a.org](mailto:pro@lions105a.org) and a member of the Communications Team will give you a call to chat with you. Your story along with a photo will then be published in Pride of Lions and the District Facebook.

Lion Rita Tanda  
Communications & PR / Marketing