

SCARBOROUGH 88 ROUND TABLE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP AND TWINNING.



On the cold, dark evening of Saturday, 6 April 2013, in Doetinchem, The Netherlands, 160 people gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of a Dutch Round Table, Aalten No 88. In amongst that group was a party of 42 guests from Scarborough. At a suitable juncture in the evening, Mike Thorpe from the Scarborough guests, was invited to address the assembly.

Mick reminded the audience that 50 years earlier in 1963 he, as the then Secretary of Scarborough Round Table No 88, had received a letter, with a Dutch postmark, which carried an invitation. The invitation was for Scarborough Table (No 88) to send a single delegate to attend the inauguration and presentation of the charter of incorporation to the 88th Dutch Round Table, to be known as Aalten.

When the invitation was reported to the Scarborough Round Table members, such was the enthusiastic response that Mick was obliged to respond to the invitation by asking if seven Scarborough Tablers could attend the event. The Dutch were delighted to be able to meet such a request so that the following members of Scarborough Round Table later made the crossing to the charter celebration at Montferland on 16 May 1963: Denis Chapman, John Ellender, Tom Pindar, Geoff Rhodes, Colin Sedgwick, Mick Thorpe (Secretary) and Arnold Wilson (Chairman). The 1963 evening was a splendid occasion with 287 people enjoying the birth of a new Round Table. Mick explained to the audience the proceedings that took place in 1963 to create the new Round Table. He was able to draw on a report in the official history of Scarborough Round Table, published in 1968. Mick had even kept the menu for the evening as a souvenir, and he produced it to show the 2013 Dutch that back in 1963 they enjoyed such delights as "Chipolata pudding".

Mick struck a poignant note when he reminded the 2013 gathering that, regrettably, of the 18 members of the then new Dutch Round Table in 1963, only one, Wim Smees, still survives. Sadly Wim was too ill to attend the event. Of the intrepid 1963 Scarborough party only three were still living. Two of these, Tom Pindar and Denis Chapman, were unfortunately unable to undertake the trip to Holland for health reasons. Both had sent their warmest personal greetings via Mick to Dutch friends old and new.

The visit to Holland in 1963 was marked by a particular kindness that has remained one of the key features of all such visits since. All seven Scarborough Tablers were able to stay in the homes of Aalten Tablers. Mick, speaking as he was in English, didn't need to point out to the audience that all the Scarborough contingent still benefited from the impressive linguistic skills of the Dutch and their impressive fluency in English, conversely matched by the poor efforts in Dutch by various Scarborough speakers!

The original English party of 1963 spent a week in Holland and built up such a friendship that, before long, a return visit by the Dutch to Scarborough was planned. So it was that, in May 1964, four Dutch Tablers from Aalten 88, with their wives, made the crossing to Scarborough.

The fellowship and friendship engendered from those early visits was so warm and mutual that they continue to this day. The two Clubs meet every two and a half years, alternating location. Now visits last over a long weekend, and Round Tablers past and present, with their partners, enjoy a weekend of events to help them to get to know their hosts' area better and to meet socially. On the Saturday evening there is a formal dinner and dance, although formality soon wavers as liquid hospitality is shared and enjoyed. In another tradition of the Saturday evening, members of each club in turn perform a light-hearted (and often badly-rehearsed) sketch or song. Most importantly, the tradition of staying in each other's homes has endured since 1963, cemented by many long-lasting friendships, which continue beyond the regular twinning visits.

Mick concluded his presentation by reminding everyone that the friendship that had been born that night had been infectious. Now, Round Table clubs with the number 8 or 88 in countries around Europe get together every year to meet and celebrate their unique fellowship at the "Eights Meeting". Furthermore, the twinning and friendship had been extended to each of our local Rotary Clubs with the Rotary Club of Scarborough Cavaliers twinning with the Rotary Club of Aalten Wisch. The Dutch Rotarians and partners made their visit to Scarborough in April 2013. What was special from that first meeting 50 years ago in 1963 has remained special throughout the years:

- Long-lasting and close friendships between Dutch and English members of Round Table.
- An extension of that friendship to partners and families as we welcome each other into our respective homes.
- A deep respect for the shared culture and values that the Dutch and English have, and an enjoyment and appreciation of our differences.

Mick ended his presentation with a toast that all present shared: "May the continued and deepening friendship between the two 88 Round Table clubs of Scarborough and Aalten continue for a further 50 years and more."

