

A pictorial history of good old Rotary



Rotarians painting swings. All photos taken from Mana Tangata: People of Action, by Stephen Clarke,

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Stephen Clarke is the author of *Mana Tangata: People in Action*, a history of Rotary, published in 2021. He is also the author of *After the War: The RSA in Wellington*.

Lockdown lols: some photos of Rotarians

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Rotarians with daughters: Cliff Cox with his daughters at a Rotary Club of Wellington 'Father and Daughter Luncheon' in 1958. EP/1958/2974-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Rotary is one of the most familiar sights on the New Zealand landscape. Its emblem welcomes you to towns and cities, to heritage parks and walkways, and Rotary clocks display the time in many centres. Rotary arrived in New Zealand in 1921 and was well received by businessmen and professionals looking for a way to serve their communities. During the 1950s and 60s, Rotary was at its zenith as the golden wheel rolled through post-war suburbs and became one of the cornerstones of modern New Zealand. Today, with 250 clubs and 7000 members, Rotary remains one of the largest service organisations in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.



Rotarians supporting mothers and babies: nurses with a young girl at Karitane Hospital, in Melrose, Wellington, 1932. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The Rotary Club of Wellington's first major project - the Karitane Hospital - began in 1921. The need for the hospital for young mothers and babies was pressing with a high infant mortality rate of 30 deaths for every 1000 births in 1920. Karitane fulfilled a commitment by Rotary to give the most vulnerable the best start in life and to improve the overall health of the nation. It was the first Karitane Hospital in the country to be especially designed for purpose by local architect and Rotarian Gray Young



Rotarians supporting the health of children: John Pascoe photograph of children lying in their beds in the solarium at the Crippled Children Society's Wilson Home in Takapuna, 1943. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

The establishment of the Crippled Children Society in 1935 stands out as a milestone for Rotary and the first case of Rotary in action on a national scale. The campaign began with the orthopaedic surgeon and Wellington Rotarian Dr Alexander Gillies providing a series of stirring addresses about the plight of his disabled child patients. In 1935, Rotary established the Crippled Children Society with 17 branches around the country.



Rotarians eating food: Rotary Club of Dunedin South at La Scala Restaurant, c.1970s.

The Rotary Club of Dunedin was established at a luncheon meeting at the Savoy Restaurant on January 30, 1923. Sir George Fenwick, a self-made businessman and proprietor of the *Otago Daily Times*, was elected president and lawyer Saul Solomon as vice-president. Most Rotary meetings in New Zealand were held at lunchtime, and finding a suitable venue with good catering was always important. Tearooms provided an ideal luncheon venue, such as Kirkcaldie & Stains in Wellington and Ballantynes in Christchurch, while in Dunedin the Savoy provided a stable home for decades.



Rotarians painting swings, the uncropped version: Papatoetoe Rotary Club members paint the anaconda snake swing they constructed in the Papatoetoe Stadium Reserve, July 1963.

The well-publicised episode in the Hutt Valley in 1954 when teenagers were meeting in private homes or parks to have sex resulted in a commission of inquiry into youth moral delinquency. The common response was to encourage youth into membership of traditional organisations, such as Scouts and Guides, and to provide programmes for young people to meet and play sport and activities under adult supervision. The 1950s and 60s for Rotary were the decades of working bees constructing paddling pools and playgrounds across the land.

***Mana Tangata: People of Action* by Stephen Clarke (Point Publishing Limited, \$60), an illustrated history of Rotary clubs in New Zealand, is available in bookstores nationwide, whenever bookstores are able to reopen.**

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