

Rotary's platinum pages

THE ROTARY Club of Barnstaple — started by just eight founders in the middle of the Roaring Twenties — celebrated its Platinum Jubilee on Friday with a record-breaking President's Night Ball at the Barnstaple Hotel.

And the *North Devon Journal* played its part with a Special Rotary Edition which is being sent all over the world. All 200 diners were presented with a souvenir copy, which told the story of the club's 75-year history.

Guests of honour at the event were the president of RIBI, the senior Rotarian in Britain, Neil Hill and his wife Maureen; district governor Les Holman of the Barnstaple Link Club and his wife Pauline; Mrs June Brown, president of the Inner Wheel of Barnstaple and her husband, Rotarian Keith Brown; and Mrs Florence Brend. A dozen Rotary Clubs from all over Devon were represented.

Mr Hill reminded everyone the aim of Rotary was 'Service Above Self' — meeting the needs of people today.

"Our service," he said, "is the rent we pay for the space we occupy on Earth."

He presented Barnstaple president Herbert Malek with a 75-year Certificate of Recognition from Rotary Worldwide president James Lacy in America.

Another special guest was Mrs Nancy Courtney, widow of the late Bill Courtney, who was attending her 62nd President's Night at the club; Nancy's husband was president in 1947-48.

The *Journal's* Special Edition, which carried photographs of the club and 14 past presidents, recorded many significant moments from the past.

During the Second World War most of the men were away fighting the Nazis. Rotary members at home served as the commander of the local Home Guard, the Weapons Officer and the Chief of the Special Constabulary.

Shaplund and Petter's factory, under founder president Adam Oliver, turned over from making furniture to gas masks. The Barnstaple Motor Company, under Rotarian Harley Brindley, made shells.

In 1947 the club had to apply to the Regional Petroleum Officer for 12 gallons of petrol, which was still rationed, to get the old folk of the town to and from their annual tea party. Two years later another tea party was

held with 300 teas being served at the wartime British Restaurant.

In 1952 the club responded at lightning speed to the Lynmouth flood disaster. In a few hours on the Sunday a house-to-house appeal was launched for clothing, blankets, food and other necessities. By that evening two truckloads were on their way.

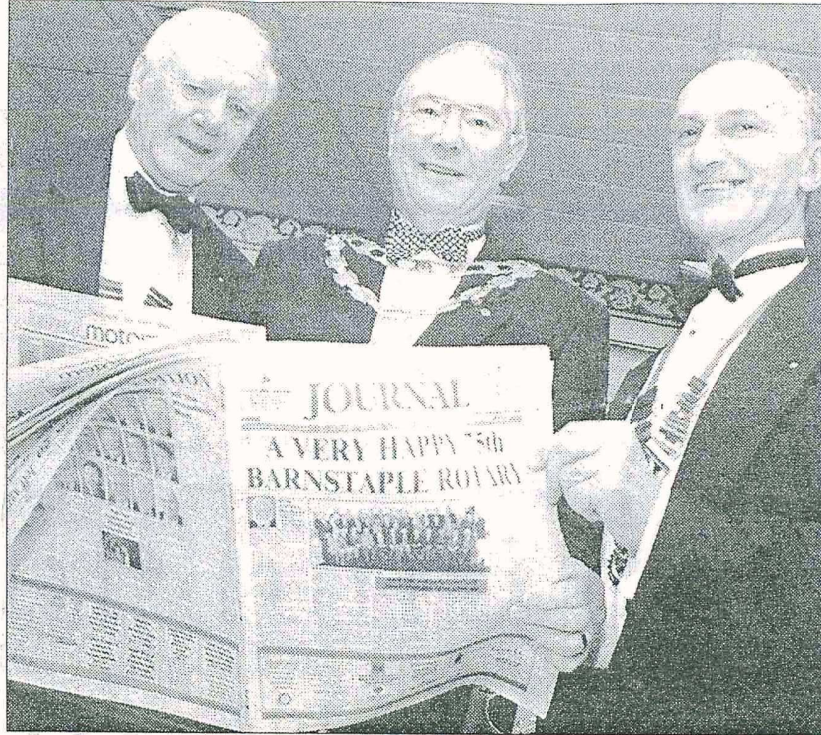
To celebrate its Golden Jubilee in 1974 the club raised the huge sum of £6,600 to create the Garden of Rest near Pilton House.

Another landmark in the club's history was the forming of the Barnstaple Rotary Amateur Theatrical Society (BRATS) by Jolyon Huxtable and Denis Loosemore in 1981. About 15 productions were staged over 10 years.

On Friday, four former BRATS, Denis Loosemore, Arnold Bradbury, George Kempton and David Morgan, performed a witty cabaret turn. At midnight a magnificent birthday cake, made by and presented by Mrs Joyce Loosemore, was cut and served with Bucks Fizz.

The ball was the celebration of a significant chunk of local history.

Toastmaster was past president David Morgan and music was provided by Fifth Avenue.



■ Making the headlines: the *North Devon Journal* produced a very special edition to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Barnstaple Rotary Club. Pictured scanning the pages are, from left: senior British Rotarian, RIBI president Neil Hill; district governor Les Holman of Barnstaple Link Club; and Barnstaple Rotary president Herbert Malek. L453/11A