

LONDON (HOST) LIONS CLUB: FIRST CLUB IN THE BRITISH ISLES.

As we begin the third Millennium, Lions of Multiple District 105 are celebrating the Jubilee of the establishment of Lionism in the British Isles and Ireland. London (Host) was officially chartered on 1 March 1950, and Tonbridge and Brighton followed in quick succession.

MD 105 Lions have a "royal origin", courtesy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother, who sent her equerry Colonel Edward Wyndham (later Lord Leconfield) to Canada to thank the Lions for providing substantial funds for children orphaned during the Blitz. Colonel Wyndham was so impressed with the Canadian Lions that he decided a Club should be established in England. Subsequently, Windsor (Ontario) Lions Club sponsored London (Host), as the first Club in the British Isles. Lord Leconfield was the Charter President, and meticulous in attending every meeting, where his tall, genial presence added distinction to our functions.

Lions expanded rapidly throughout England. By 1953 the first Lions Club in Scotland was chartered in Glasgow and by 1955 the first Lions Club in Ireland in Dublin. In 1961, District 105 became a Multiple District with two Districts A and B. Today, MD 105 consists of 13 Districts, 944 Clubs and 20,000 men and women throughout the British Isles and Ireland. Numerous Lions from MD 105 have served in higher office for Lions Clubs International, including Bert Mason (Past International President, 1984-85); five Past International Directors (Ed Peckham, Charles Allison, Bert Mason, Philip Daubeney and Colin Vincent) and our current International Director, Phil Nathan. In 1998, MD 105 hosted the International Convention in Birmingham, which was attended by over 30,000 Lions world-wide.

The "inspiration" for our Club was undoubtedly Ed Peckham. He served with the Canadian Army, was posted in England during the war and subsequently made his home in England. On numerous occasions, Ed served the Club as President or Secretary. He was District Governor (1955-56) when 105 was still a single District, and the first International Director from MD 105 (1962-64). Ed was truly a great Lion and a District 105A award was established in his memory.

London (Host) has sponsored seven clubs, City of London (1952-closed 1985), London (South) 1953 (closed 1963), Cambridge (1958), Windsor (1961), Croydon (1964), London (Chinatown) 1983 and London (Hampstead) 1984. We are also twinned with six Clubs, Paris de Doyen de France 1963; New York (Host) (USA) 1997; Misterbianco (Italy) 1998; Roma Urbe (Italy) 1998; Venezia Angelo Pariecpazio (Italy) 1999 and Viareggio Versilia Host (Italy) 2000.

Membership in London (Host) has fluctuated as members moved in or out of London, retired or passed to higher service. Given the increase in the number of Clubs in the London area (16 Clubs formed since 1950) and a decline in the desire of the public-at-large to volunteer their time for those less fortunate than themselves, we have a real challenge to increase our membership following this Jubilee celebration, and to expand our service and charitable activities to the community. The composition of our club members has always been unique, because we represent many nationalities. While some Clubs are blessed with a large membership roster, we are blessed with longevity, since our current members average 20 years of service to Lions Clubs International, collectively nearly 400 years.

The birth of Lionism in the British Isles and Ireland is truly a success story. We have a lot to be proud of, but in this ever changing world there is a lot more charitable work to be done. I challenge *all* Lions to redouble their efforts in 2000 and beyond to help those less fortunate than ourselves. "You can't get very far until you start doing something for somebody else" (Melvin Jones, Founder of Lions).

Dr. L. Elliot Shubert, President, London (Host) Lions Club, February 2000.