Rotary Connection

Seven Teams, Forty Thousand People, and a Bottle of Wine

Club Meeting Highlights • Wednesday 4 November 2026

President Bob Hall was in the chair at the Geraldton Golf Club at 7.00 am. Grant Russell, President of the Great Northern Football League, was the guest speaker. Leni Tenwinkel (RYE-Germany) was also a guest.

Meeting at a Glance

- Bob Hall in the chair; Sergeant Bob Urquhart; invocation and toast by Ian Taylor.
- Guest speaker: Grant Russell, President, Great Northern Football League. Guest: Leni Tenwinkel.
- Apology: Hugh Lavery.
- Radio Auction this weekend. Meet at the sea container Friday 10.00 am. Bring a plate on Sunday.
- Board meeting now Monday 23 November, Midwest Financial Services.
- Heads and tails to Rob Mosel, who donated the wine onward.



Secretary Grant Woodhams, President Bob Hall and Grant Russell, President of the GNFL.

Opening the Morning

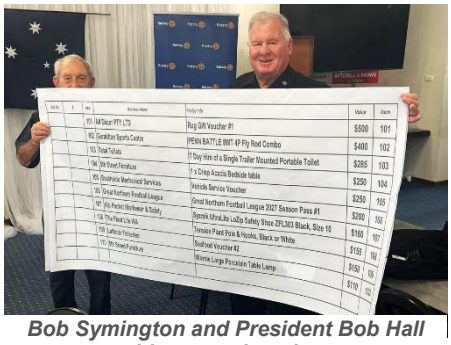
The room was full of auction talk before the meeting began. Di Gilleland had the sheets from Sun City Print. Cyril Elwood has retired. The new printers did a good job. The sheets were clearer and darker than last year. The teaser had not run in the paper but a photograph of the club had.

Announcements

Radio Auction — Di Gilleland

The auction is this weekend, Sunday at NACC. Those who can are asked to bring a plate of morning or afternoon tea for Sunday. The volunteer list is healthy.

Details of a post-auction function will come by email from President Bob. Bob Urquhart will be in Denpasar. Don has other duties. Grant Woodhams has a high-school reunion.



Bob Symington and President Bob Hall with an auction sheet

***STOP PRESS**: Very successful Radio Auction on Sunday with more than $40,000 raised from community and business donations and fantastic work by our volunteers. More next week.*

Board Meeting — Bob Hall

The board meeting has been postponed. It will now be on Monday 23 November at Midwest Financial Services. An email will confirm the time.

Club AGM — Grant Woodhams

The club's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is on 2 December.

Youth Exchange — Clare McElhinney

Clare has a student at school who is interested in Rotary exchange. She has invited her to the Radio Auction on Sunday.

Rotary Youth Exchange - Leni Tenwinkel — With the Keoghs



Leni Tenwinkel (Germany)

Leni has changed host families and is now with the Keoghs. You might see her working in the kitchen on Wednesday mornings. She is studying a lot and wants to do well in the exams.

She took part in Halloween last Saturday night. She has also spent some time on the beach and is resuming tennis lessons. She will go on an excursion to Albany in a few weeks and is looking forward to the Radio Auction on Sunday.

Guest Speaker — Grant Russell

The league that stayed the same



Grant Russell, President, Great Northern Football League

Grant Woodhams introduced Grant Russell as the President of the Great Northern Football League. Born in Geraldton, he was a Rotary exchange student to Big Bear Lake in California in 1986.

He is critical of the operations of the AFL, but he is a St Kilda supporter. He was a sports trainer at Railway FC for 33 years. He was also a former President of the GNFL in 2000.

Running a business as an accountant, the introduction of GST, the chair of the Nagle College Board, and two young children led him to resign. He returned last year.

The Great Northern Football League was formed in 1961 from earlier leagues in the district. It has had seven teams for most of that time. Geraldton has grown from under 10,000 people in 1961 to around 43,000 now. The number of teams has not changed.

> *"We've got the same number of teams for almost quadruple the population."*

Auskick and the under-8s and under-10s are full. The numbers are huge.

The league loses them at under-16s and Colts. The girls want to continue but there is no Colts competition for women. They are scared of the senior bodies. They go to netball. The boys go surfing, discover girls, discover alcohol, or other substances. Getting them back does not happen.

Priorities have changed. People work two jobs. The cost of living is high. The Country Football League nearly introduced a $35 player levy. The big leagues pushed back and it was withdrawn. Thirty-five dollars is a lot of money for some families.

In the black, and the money



Grant Russell presenting to the club.

The GNFL have signed Bendigo Community Bank as their major sponsor and have turned the finances around, from the red to operating in the black. One of the sacrifices this year was not sending a senior men's team to Country Week. They did send a Colts side, which won Country Week for the first time in 27 years. They also sent a women's team, which was defeated in the Grand Final. This year the GNFL has issued $12,000 in fines to clubs and is introducing a much greater element of corporate governance.

There is a struggle. Mullewa Football Club is assessing whether it can field three competitive sides. It will not field a women's team. A decision will be made by the club, the league and the other clubs. Grant's concern is the snowball. If Mullewa goes, does pressure then fall on Chapman Valley and Northampton to amalgamate? Where does it stop?

> *"Do we then put pressure on the Chapman Valley and the Northampton amalgamating and coming down to six, down to five teams? Where does it stop?"*

The West Australian Football Commission owns the Eagles and the Dockers outright. The boards of the Commission, the Eagles and the Dockers control the bank accounts. On the consolidated balance sheet the Eagles and the Dockers hold $170 million in cash. Not allocated revenue. Cold hard cash and a term deposit. The grassroots bodies have asked for the interest. Leave the capital. Use the interest. The answer has been no. Grant has written a submission. It falls on deaf ears. He barely watches the AFL anymore. He treats it with the same disdain it treats grassroots football.

East Fremantle, and Las Vegas

Questions came from Ian Taylor, Bob Hall, Di Gilleland and Grant Woodhams. They led Grant to speak of the relationship between the GNFL and East Fremantle Football Club, and of some of the GNFL players who have done well at East Fremantle and in the AFL. Reed Foote of Brigades played in the successful East Fremantle Colts premiership side. Three Geraldton boys were in that team. The coach was Sam Mainwaring, an ex-Geraldton boy. His father Glenn has been in the building trade here for years. His uncle Chris played for the West Coast Eagles.

Grant had one more story. In 1986, while on exchange, the International Rotary Conference was in Las Vegas. His district governor, Marvin Billings, arranged for him to address the conference. He had played in a Colts preliminary final in front of 1,500 people. In Las Vegas he spoke to 15,000. It was daunting. Talking to Rotarians this morning, he said, had been more enjoyable and more homely.

> *"You get in the stadium in Las Vegas and speak in front of 15,000 people, that's a little bit daunting, but it's been a lot more enjoyable and homely talking to Rotarians this morning."*

The thanks were from Grant Woodhams: a virtual certificate for 200 polio immunisations in Grant Russell's name. Di noted that Grant is a long-time radio auction block sponsor, along with Ian Taylor and Panaceum. The GNFL is also listed in the auction paper.

Coming Up

Sunday 8 November — Radio auction
NACC Conference Rooms, 8.00 am to 4.00 pm. Bring a plate.

Wednesday 11 November — Club meeting
- Geraldton Golf Club, 6.45 for 7.00 am.

Register Here Fellowship and Connection Meeting -11th November

Wednesday 18 November — Club meeting
Geraldton Golf Club, 6.45 for 7.00 am. Guest speaker Bob Hall, Scotland.

Monday 23 November — Club board
Midwest Financial Services. Agenda items and Reports to Grant before the meeting.

Wednesday 25 November — Club meeting
CWA Hall, 6.45 for 7.00 am.

30 November — RYLA applications close
Ages 18–28. Camp in mid-January. Grant, or ryla@rotarywa.au.

Wednesday 2 December — Club AGM
Geraldton Golf Club, 6.45 for 7.00 am.

Wednesday 9 December — Club meeting
Geraldton Golf Club, 6.45 for 7.00 am. Guest speaker Bishop Michael Morrissey, a Christmas message.

Saturday 12 December — Christmas function
Tarts & Co., 6:00 pm ‘til whenever. Names to Grant.

Register: Christmas Celebration

Wednesday 20 January 2027 — Club meeting
Breakfast at Levy Street Life. Guest speaker Rohan Prowse, Levy Street Life and the Friday Circulars.

Fellowship and Fines



President Bob Hall and Sergeant Bob Urquhart during fines.

Heads and tails, with a bottle of red, went to Rob Mosel. He donated it to Don Rolston, who donated it to Grant Russell. Grant does not drink. Di offered to help with the drinking.

Bob Hall and Ian Taylor, for the spectacles. Bob saw Ian professionally, got all the way home, and discovered he had left his reading glasses in the surgery. A phone call solved it.

Jim Dillon, for associating too much with doctors. His nephew is six foot five, jogs 12 kilometres, rides 120 kilometres on Saturdays, works as a doctor and a security guard, and played ruck for Bencubbin. His wife is a nurse. She went with him to see the GP of the Year.

Di, for the magnet. She lost the one on the back of her badge and stole one from someone else. She also explained the sea containers. Box Street and Anderson Street. The room remained confused.



Secretary Grant and Leni Tenwinkel with the fines box.

Those not at the auction. Bob Urquhart to Denpasar. Grant Woodhams to a reunion. A dollar each.

Don's youngest grandson is 30. Di bought the box and suggested that Treasurer Rob says he will lose the receipts. What hope do we have? Jim produced forty dollars from containers of change that had been rained on for months.

A Word of Thanks

Thank you to Bob for the chair and the board date, to Ian for the invocation, to Sergeant Bob for the box, to Di for the auction and the sheets, to Grant Woodhams for the introduction, to Clare for the exchange student, to Leni for the kitchen and the exams, and to Grant Russell — for the seven teams, the forty thousand people, the Colts who won Country Week, and the more enjoyable morning in Geraldton than the one in Las Vegas.

— Rotary Club of Greater Geraldton —

Prepared with assistance from Grok (xAI). All content reviewed and verified by the author.



Room Sign – Crawford Lodge - 2026