

THE HISTORY OF THE ROTARY WHEEL



The Wheel today

We start with the perimeter, with the 24 teeth. These could be seen as the clubs, each prepared and willing to engage with other clubs, or organisations, around the world. With the object of doing good. They could also be seen, as pointing outwards, to the many directional activities of Rotary, through its wide variety of international programmes.

The solid band in blue and gold, which supports the teeth, gives the strength which is needed to transmit the power, and hold the Rotary movement as one. It carries the inscription "Rotary International". It had four segments which could represent the four avenues of service. The six spokes bind together the hub and the rim. They may be seen as the Districts, moving the power, from its source, to the working elements, which are the teeth, representing the clubs. Why six spokes? Well this divides the twenty four teeth, to give us a reminder, of the four way test.

The hub is absolutely central, to ensure that the whole gear runs true to its purpose. It has that vital notch, which we call, the keyway, which locks the hub to the drive shaft. "Well", you will say, "there is no drive shaft". maybe we overlook the fact, that not

everything in this world, is visible or tangible. There is that element, which the religions of the world, call "faith". In Rotary we can see it as a shared belief. The power and the energy which is created, when people of like mind, are committed to releasing this energy. In our case, through "Service above Self".

All we need now, to power up the gear wheel, with all its potential, is to lock the drive shaft to the hub, by putting the key in the keyway. In all this, we have not mentioned, the Rotarian but we can now see, that he or she is, in fact, the key. Without the key the whole concept fails, there just has to be a commitment by the individual Rotarian.

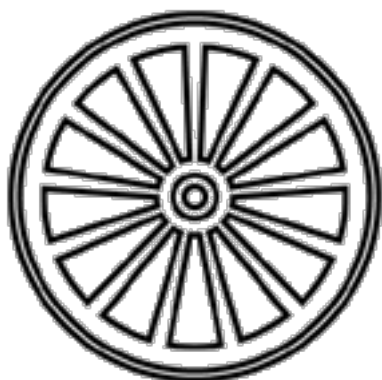
Now all this has a strong mechanical, engineering connotation. One can almost feel the grease between thumb and finger, and smell the hot oil from the bearings. Like all things mechanical, we can get failure, or partial failure. A common failure could be caused by slippage. Slippage haunts us, still, in this computer age. Indeed it can be so severe that the whole exercise can fail and disappear. With our Rotary wheel, this is most likely in two areas. One, a failure of the teeth, that is, the clubs, to engage with others to good purpose, Two, more importantly, failure to have the key in the keyway, or only partially so. This can slow down the whole movement, or cause it to chatter, to run unevenly, and reduce the effectiveness of the clubs. In the Rotary setup, slippage is quite easy to detect. As it develops, we can all become aware of it. We can feel the slippage when we come to a poorly attended meeting, when the meeting is subdued, and lacks vitality. There is further, very obvious slippage, when a number of members leave the meeting, before the speaker starts. Then, of course, there is the fireside, or committee meeting, with an attendance of only a fraction of its members.

Or the undermanned club project. All are evidence of slippage, and all affect performance.

When we accept that part of the symbolism, which puts the Rotarian in the keyway, then, no matter what interpretation we put on the rest of the wheel, the whole thing depends on you, the Rotarian. you may not always be able to be "in the slot" but you should know that you will be missed, because no one else, can make your unique contribution.

The Rotary wheel emblem is a good one. It is designed for work and involvement. The Rotary movement is a world wide one, of real significance, and tremendous potential. It has impressive statistics as to numbers of members, clubs, districts, and countries, international projects and contacts. It is possible, that with the warm fuzzies, which the big picture evokes, we may be losing sight of the importance of the individual.

Perhaps, in our fascination with the whole movement, and its emblem, we should refocus our attention, on the small slot, the keyway, in the middle, and the importance of those who fill it, and whom we invite to fill it.



The Badge in 1906



The Badge in 1910



The Badge in 1913



The Badge in 1913