

## CLUBS &amp; SOCIETIES

Send your club reports by email to: [morpeth.herald@jpress.co.uk](mailto:morpeth.herald@jpress.co.uk) or by post to: Morpeth Herald, 17 Newgate Street, Morpeth NE61 1AW

# Members hear of vital two-wheeled service

## MORPETH ROTARY CLUB

Sue and Owain Harris are keen motorcyclists and a few years ago they helped to found a charity called Northumbria Blood Bikes.

The National Blood Service does not operate after 7pm on a weekday and is closed at weekends. The blood bike volunteers aim to fill the gap.

They carry blood free of charge to hospitals after hours – hospitals would otherwise have to use a taxi and taxi costs to bring in blood are around £20,000 to 30,000 a year at each hospital.

Members are all keen bikers who fund-raise and use their own money to pay for the charity. The founders got in touch with the National Association of Blood Bikes and they sent someone to the region to tell them how to start up such a charity.

They listened and agreed to set up then were faced with lots of paperwork to arrange a constitution and a committee. A system of fund-raising was the most important element.

They bought an information display unit, special jackets with the logo and fund-raising tabards and they do not claim individual expenses. Any money that they raise stays within the local area.

In addition, the National Association can give financial support to local areas for special projects.

The volunteer riders must be over 25, have had two years experience of riding with a full licence and have passed the advanced test. Bikes have to be purchased with the right carrying capacity before adding the official livery and a



Sue and Owain Harris of the Northumbria Blood Bikes charity during their recent presentation at Morpeth Rotary Club.

blue light.

They have to pay for maintenance, tax, insurance and petrol. They depend on donations and fund-raising at weekends, including at major mass participation sporting events such as the Great North Run and Great North Swim and a skydiving activity. They bought two Triumph Trophies after their most recent efforts.

The blood is carried in insulated, sealed cool bags that are picked up from the National Blood Transfusion Service on Barrack Road in Newcastle. They have a rota of riders who go on call from 7pm and on some days they may not be needed, but on others they will be out on jobs all night.

They go as far north as Berwick and as far south as Darlington and head west to Hexham and Barnard Castle among other places. When a hospital agrees to work with them, it signs a service level agreement. The charity has monthly meetings, and there is an open meeting every three months and an annual meeting open to the public.

Around 120 bikers are involved, with 50 trained to advanced level and also trained on how to carry the blood.

They can only run with blue lights on if they are given a special letter from a hospital to say the run is urgent and even then they do not break the speed limit.

Bikes carry a tracker so

they can be monitored for speed and location at any time. Other urgent items could be carried if there is room, such as X-ray plates or breast milk.

Hospitals using the scheme include Wansbeck General, North Tyneside General, the RVI, Queen Elizabeth in Gateshead, Darlington Memorial, South Shields General and the James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough.

The other bikes they have include a Honda, BMW and two Yamahas, all 1200-1300 cc, and some smaller bikes. They have a website and Facebook page.

Gordon Bolton gave a vote of thanks and said that the club hoped to make a donation during the next Rotary year.

## Everything stops for tea

MORPETH INNER WHEEL

for its annual AGM.

After the business meet-

## Biting talk!

PONTELAND SENIOR GENTLEMEN'S CLUB

The guest speaker at the