

In this ninth episode of Step Forward and Volunteer we welcome Richard Allen, president of Budleigh Salterton Lions, and Lynda Burns of Dalbeattie & District Lions. Richard gives us an insider's view on organising Budleigh's annual Gala Week and its popular pebble-building contest, while Lynda recounts Lions' efforts in her part of rural south-west Scotland to refurbish and maintain much-loved memorial benches along the Jubilee Path between the coastal villages of Rockcliffe and Kippford.

Be uplifted, be inspired. This is Step Forward and Volunteer.

Hello everybody, welcome to the ninth episode of Step Forward and Volunteer, a podcast brought to you by Lions Clubs British Isles.

My name is Romily Broad and I'd like to thank you for tuning in. If you haven't listened before, our aim is simple. We want to celebrate the positive difference volunteering makes to communities across the British Isles and beyond. To do that, we'll be speaking to those who give up their time to help others, inspiring more people to step forward and volunteer.

This month on the podcast I welcome Budleigh Salterton Lion Richard Allen, who joins to tell us all about the annual competition on Budleigh beach in the South West, where pebbles are used to create works of art which are judged during Budleigh Gala week.

We also feature Lynda Burns, a member of Dalbeattie Lions from rural part of Scotland. Dalbeattie Lions have refurbished a number of benches on the Jubilee path which takes in the picturesque coastline between the seaside villages of Rockcliffe and Kippford.

But first, I have a favour to ask. Because this is a new podcast, we want your help in getting the word out there. Tell your family, tell your friends - and if you're a Lions member, why not let other members of your club know about the podcast - and how easy it is to listen. All you need to do is either go on the website www.lionsclubs.co where you will see a link to the podcast, or you can search for Step Forward and Volunteer on apps like Spotify, Podbean, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

You can listen on-demand or subscribe so that you never miss an episode. We publish a new programme on the second Wednesday of each month, and we're really keen to spread the positivity and get as many people listening as we can.

Now it's time to introduce our first guest. As I mentioned earlier, Richard Allen, member of Budleigh Salterton Lions tells us about the fun on Budleigh beach where pebbles are used to create tall towers and beach art during one of the most popular events of the annual calendar.

Richard, thanks for joining us. Thank you. Could you start by telling us a little bit about gala week and what people do in a pebble building competition and how that all came about?

Okay, so the gala week is, a whole week of fundraising events and activities that Budleigh Salterton Lions Club puts on. We raise money for the club. But also we have lots of events where we facilitate other charities such as hospice care, Cats Protection League, the RNLI, all sorts of local charities. We give them the opportunity to hold their own events, we will help them and they can fundraise directly for their own charity. But the idea is it's basically family fun for a week. And it's always the last week of May. So it covers the may bank holiday Monday.

This year's gala week was a return to form because I think there had been a hiatus for predictable reasons, right?

Yes, that's right. We had to cancel two gala weeks due to COVID pandemic. So it was a real welcome return this year. Everyone in the town was absolutely delighted that it was back on and of course, we had lots of visitors to Budleigh Salterton as well. It was such a lovely place on the Jurassic Coast. And so everyone had lots of fun. The pebble building competition is one of my favourite fundraising events of the whole year. We're incredibly lucky to be in this position where we're on the coast, and we have this beautiful pebble beach. The competition is held on bank holiday Monday, always in the last week of May. And it's been going for many, many years. And in fact, I asked Jeff Paver who has been organising the competition since I joined the club. When did it start? He said he wasn't sure. But it has

been going ever since he joined the club, which was 33 years ago. So it's a long running event. Wow. Yeah. Okay,

What does it involve?

Yeah. So initially, it began as a competition to build the tallest tower from the pebbles on the beach. But a few years ago, we came up with the idea of having another competition with separate prizes for the best pebble design. And what we found is this was much more inclusive and meant a lot more people took part. So it was more successful. And then sometimes families who take part are split into two groups, and one group will build the tallest tower, and the other group will make a design. So it's really good fun. One thing I would say is it's it has, as I said, it's been going for so long. I can't say how it originally came about. But the beauty of it is, is that it's relatively easy to organise, and inexpensive. It involves whole families, and lots of other people having fun and raising funds on our lovely beach.

Awesome. It sounds like a brilliant event for the family to take part in. And do you have themes, for example, that can spark creative minds when they get down to the beach?

Yeah, so this year, we felt there could only be one theme really. So it had to be Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, certainly for the design competition. The standard was especially high I have to say this year and it was very difficult for the judges to make their decision. We had some wonderful designs. People had really use their imagination to come up with some fantastic creations. We had pictures of the queen as you'd imagine, Buckingham Palace, the Union Jack and of course corgis. So it was all there. Right? There is this amazing array of different coloured pebbles on the beach. So it's lovely to see how creative people can be. But it definitely helps catch the judges eye if the competitors use shells and seaweed, as well as the pebbles. And if anyone else is thinking of doing this competition, one tip is just immediately prior to judging, wet the pebbles because it really makes the colours pop.

So that really is an insider's tip. So what kind of people do you think would, would normally take part in the pebble building competition?

Well, we really do get people of all ages. It's very much a family event. And it's highly competitive, it has to be said, we do get lots of chat and banter as the competitions taking place. Some local families have been taking part in the competition for years and years. They've grown up together and gone to school together, so they know each other well. But people are coming along now. And they were children when they originally took part. And now they're coming with their children and their parents. And so you've got three generations of people from the same family all having a great time on the beach together. And it's, it's just lovely to see.

Brilliant. Do you actually out of interest? Do you get people coming from further afield than the local area?

We do? Yeah. Because we're a seaside town. And there are holiday camps nearby and holiday accommodation. People will come down onto Budleigh seafront. And so we don't just get local people taking part, we also get visitors as well, which is great. And then you get people coming down from Exeter and places like that on a bank holiday Monday. So you know, there's lots of scope to get numbers on the beach really, the more the merrier.

What, what happens out of interest, what happens to these wonderful creations afterwards? Do they just remain on the beach? Or..

Yeah, well, that's a really good question, actually, we see that as one of the benefits of this competition is that it does leave an eye catching and interesting legacy on the beach. As you can imagine the towers, they don't tend to last too long, because it's so much fun to knock them down. But with regard to the designs, they can often last all summer. And so both locals and visitors to the town can enjoy them as well. You know, like this year's designs are still on the beach today. So it's lovely.

Wow. And so do you need to get any special permissions or take any health and safety issues into mind when you're organising it?

Yeah, you do. I think you need to speak to the relevant local authority, or the council to make sure they're happy with what is being proposed. It sounds daft, but you should really check who owns the beach. Crown Estates is often the owner of the beach. And they don't tend to require permissions for things like beach cleaning, metal detecting and this sort of

thing. So it should be okay. But you must undertake a risk assessment, basically, to ensure the health and safety of everyone taking part obviously.

Yeah. And I would think there are all sorts of places around our glorious coastline that can take a lead from the sorts of things you do. And I suppose you'd encourage Lions Clubs around the coasts to give it a go.

Yeah, absolutely. I think it's such a fun event both for the Lions themselves and for obviously, the competitors. There are certain things that you need. And obviously, the main thing is a pebble beach. But also you do need a sense of fun. And as with any lions fundraising event, you do need a team of willing volunteers, but also good PR as well. We find when we promote it on Facebook, and you know, the social media, we do get more people turn up to these things. We always like to have the lions gazebo set up on the seafront. And that's where the contestants can register. We have a contactless payment facility. But what's, what's nice about being on the seafront is you get so many passers-by, it's an opportunity for the Lions to engage with people and potentially attract new members of course to the club.

Yeah. you mentioned that there was a lot of creativity on display around the Queen's Jubilee this year. Is there anywhere that people might ultimately be able to go and have a look at some photos and things to see what to have a look for themselves?

Yeah, absolutely. So there are some photos on our website, which is www.budleighlions.com But also you can look at our Facebook page, and there'll be photos on there. So yeah, there's some certainly some inspiration if you have a look at those places.

Brilliant. And I suppose a generally good tip for anyone at other Lions Clubs listening to this is to use those things websites, but especially Facebook, it's very easy. There's always a photo opportunity when lions are getting involved, raising funds and organising events. And there's nothing more useful than a couple of great photos to promote the event next year. So, on that note, thanks very much for joining us today and all the best with, with everything else that you've got going on for the rest of the year.

Thank you very much.

It's time now for a short break - we'll be back, after this...

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In 2022, we've celebrated the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth the second. But Dalbeattie Lions are involved with a community service project that commemorates the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887, 135 years ago.

The Jubilee path, as it's known, is a short coastal trail which starts from the seaside village of Rockcliffe, finishing in the popular sailing resort of Kippford.

The short beautiful walk, of around 1 mile each way, takes in breath taking views across the bay. The land you walk through is managed by the National Trust for Scotland for wildlife and recreation and in summer you'll see the flowering meadows alongside the path.

Lynda Burns, from Dalbeattie Lions joins to tell us about the clubs involvement in refurbishing the benches along the Jubilee path.

Yes, I'll tell you how it is from my side. There's coastal little towns, tiny little towns on the estuary that runs into the Solway itself. It's a little estuary. And there's, Kippford and Rockcliffe. They're joined up by this little core path, that was initiated by the National Trust. And the National Trust around here is organised at Threave. There's a National Trust Training Centre at Threave in Castle Douglas, which is four miles away. This little coastal path, the bottom half of it, one half of it, the coastal side is owned by the National Trust, but the northern side of the path, the opposite side of the path is owned by the Forestry Commission. So it's a core path through both organisations. And it's a lovely walk covered with trees. It's all tree lined all the way. it's a very popular walk. And it was the first path that they did, the National Trust. And people that have passed away get benches put on this path. There's one every few hundred yards, they get a name plaque put on you know, to commemorate someone, people have to buy them. It's up to the person that's had it installed to maintain it. The National Trust. They don't do anything with it once it's installed, and neither do the Forest Commission, but both organisations are happy to install benches.

But what happens is, more often than not, people that aren't maintaining them, either move away or they don't come from around here anywhere and they get neglected. The benches they were in a terrible state some had disintegrated completely altogether. So it was a suggestion at the club one day that perhaps that might be a good thing to do under the Community Service. So we got together about five or six of us got everything, equipment that we needed. A local Dumfries hire and supplies company gave us two sets of Makita drills and cleaning equipment, electrical cordless electrical equipment, to clean the benches and everything. We bought a really good quality stain, repaired them when we could, and we had new plaques made in stainless steel for the ones that had disintegrated. We put new plaques on, kept all the old things like you would imagine, and they've been really, really so well received, we couldn't believe it, by people in Dalbeattie because it's probably so popular walk all around, really with local people. People in Kippford and Rockcliffe really were pleased with what we did. So much so that we got asked to do, a little lower path with three more benches. that's the next project for the benches.

Wow. So was there a reason that you thought let's refurbish the ones that are there rather than just replacing them? Which seems maybe simpler?

The lions do have funding because we have a charity shop where we get our funding from to do things in the town. But we haven't got that much where we can keep replacing, although we did replace one of them, one that was completely disintegrated. Because it was under trees and wet all the time. We did replace that one with a plastic one. And had our Dalbeattie and District Lions Club name embedded in the bench. So everybody knows they've been refurbished. And I actually made some signs while we were refurbishing the benches. to say that the lions were refurbishing them, and it might be wet paint. So we got feedback from that as well because they knew who was doing it. But we don't we don't have the money to completely replace them. Do you know what I mean? Because we've got the money to refurbish by buying paint. And the hire and supplies let us have the cordless kits, free of charge because we were a charity. They've been good with us. And they said they will do it again, for the next three benches.

How many benches do you think there are along the length of the walk?

I think there was eight altogether. Right. Is the aim to get to all of them, do you think? Oh yeah, on the first original path. We did them all on there, and they are super and clean and you know, they're they're really good. So we just have these other three to finish off. And it's been very popular.

Right and then that's done. Yes. How long does it last, until you need to do it all again.

Well, that's the thing. It's just depends on how good how good the stain. It was a really good waterproof quality. It was expensive, the stain that we used to clean them all up it should last about five or six years, perhaps. We'll go and check every now and again because we're always on the path.

That sounds like it's probably very picturesque as well, the sort of place you'd want to sit on a bench?

Yes, you can see the sea from the walk.

Yeah, absolutely brilliant spots for remembrance, which is of course, all about in the end. And that's why it's worth putting in the energy and effort to make sure that those benches are fit for use. Because you know, that's what you want to help us remember those people?

Yeah. In fact, on the next lower path is the man that he's lost his wife. and he installed a bench, and he asked us if we can refurbish it. Next time we do the lower path. And that won't be that old I don't think. We're quite happy to do that for him. And then they're all They're all much of a muchness in a way. And the National Trust at Threave at Castle Douglas, they've gone round and strimmed round the benches because the grass underneath had grown through the benches. So they had strimmed round because it's more of a natural walk than, than a park walk.

It's a good example of lions doing something that actually ends up involving other parts of the ecosystem if you like it's got local businesses contributing equipment for free, you've got the National Trust working in partnership as well. And you end up with a really useful fitting memorial, right?

Yes.

I could just add Romily that we all actually had fun, refurbishing them. You know what, it didn't seem much it wasn't a chore because we took sandwiches and had lunch there. And it was actually quite fun us getting to know each other. The Lions members, you know, that was a good part of it.

You said there were like five or six people involved. And what what season did this occur in?

Well, it was summer

What a brilliant way to spend some time.

Thank you Lynda. Details of the Jubilee path benches will be added to the map of benches nominated by Lions.

If anyone listening is interested in visiting the Jubilee path, it's situated just off the main A710 Dumfries to Dalbeattie road, or you could enter the words **pounces beard dusty** into the what3words website, which will take you there.

That is all we have time for on this month's podcast, everyone. If you've enjoyed this episode, do check out the LION magazine Summer special which can be read online or listened to from www.lionclubs.co

Don't forget you can also listen to past editions of the Step Forward and Volunteer podcast any time via www.lionsclubs.co or on Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts or Google podcasts.

Thanks once again to our guests Richard and Lynda and a big thank you to you our listeners as well. Take care and goodbye.