



Rotary Club of Christchurch South Inc.

P O Box 12-243, Christchurch 8023, NZ.

SERVICE ABOVE SELF



Bulletin

#15 for 07 October 2026

SPEAKER REPORT – 07 October 2026

From Dolby to the Bay Area: Mark Atherton's San Francisco Adventures

Rotarians were recently taken on a lively and entertaining journey through San Francisco in the 1990s when English electrical engineer Mark Atherton shared a collection of stories from his years living and working in the city.

Mark's engineering career had already taken an interesting turn when he was working for Dolby Laboratories in London. At just 29, single and ready for an adventure, he was offered the opportunity to work in San Francisco. His introduction to the American office was somewhat unusual: what he thought was a short visit to collect a job turned out, in retrospect, to be a week-long interview. The experience clearly worked, because before long Mark was on an aircraft with a one-way ticket to the United States.

San Francisco in those days was certainly different from London. Mark described his first impressions of the city, including the colourful (notably LGBTQ+) neighbourhoods he encountered on his daily walk to work. He also recalled the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, which had caused extensive damage in the Bay Area. At Dolby's headquarters, founder Ray Dolby had deliberately left a cracked section of plasterboard unrepaired as a quiet memorial to the earthquake—a typically understated reminder of a remarkable event.

Many of Mark's best stories, however, concerned the people he encountered. His first San Francisco housemate was a political refugee from China who spoke very little English. Mark later discovered that his new friend had previously been second-in-command of a major Chinese electronics company with some 44,000 employees. Within months, Mark found himself sharing his living room with senior Hewlett-Packard executives negotiating a multimillion-dollar semiconductor factory deal.

Other adventures followed. Mark became involved with the preservation of a former military missile site, eventually finding himself giving a public tour to a group of park rangers and historians. He also attended an apparently ordinary potluck in Napa Valley, only to discover later that many of the Bay Area's prominent chefs and winemakers had been among the guests.

Perhaps the most revealing story concerned Mark's volunteering with the live radio programme West Coast Live. He enjoyed meeting the performers but freely admitted that he often had no idea who they were. His philosophy was simple: if someone was interesting and enjoyable to work with, invite them to lunch. Only later would he discover that some of his new acquaintances were well-known musicians and personalities.

Mark's stories painted a fascinating picture of San Francisco as a place where curiosity, openness and a willingness to accept unexpected opportunities could lead to extraordinary experiences. His career with Dolby was impressive, but it was the people, friendships and adventures along the way that made his San Francisco years so memorable.

Thanks to Alan McK. for the report.

Upcoming meetings:

- 14 October

No meeting at the Cashmere Club this week, Wed 14 October

- 21 October

Dr Richard Gibbs, Soil Science and Sports Surface Specialist - Growing grass indoors; the science and technology behind Christchurch's new Te Kaha stadium

- 28 October

Club Forum Night – Committee Updates

Community Service project:

- **John Taylor Walkway**

A new date has been confirmed with the Park Ranger Nigel.

Saturday 17th October 2026

10-12am Work details to be confirmed nearer the time and BBQ to follow.

Notices:

- **OCTOBER WALK/LUNCH THURSDAY 15**

Date:	Thursday 15 October
Park/Meet:	Near <u>Cracroft Shopping Centre</u> , Corner <u>Cashmere</u> and <u>Hoon Hay Roads</u>
Time:	10.30am
Walk:	Explore the local area
Lunch:	<u>Poco Poco</u> , <u>Cracroft Shopping Centre</u>
Leader	<u>Geoff</u>

If you are unable to join the walk, then come and have lunch with us.

If the weather is unsuitable for walking. we will still meet for lunch at 12:00 noon

- **Bullet points from Monday 5 Oct Cluster meeting are attached to this Bulletin email.**
- **[...] on Wednesday the 21st of October** we have the pleasure of Dr Richard Gibbs. In short, he's the 'grass man' that set up the stadium turf. A very interesting speaker and topic.

I encourage you to invite guests who may consider this of interest (be sure to let Alan McKinnon know).

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/360915229/revealed-new-zealands-most-expensive-lawn-its-own-full-time-doctor-call>

Kindest Regards Graham

21/10/2026	Dr Richard Gibbs Soil Science and Sports Surface Specialist (Friends and Family Night)	Growing grass indoors – the science and technology behind Christchurch's new stadium'	Dr Richard Gibbs Soil Science and Sports Surface Specialist M. +64 (0)22 040 0419 (NZ) E. gibbsygrass@gmail.com
-------------------	---	--	---

- **No meeting at the Cashmere Club this week, Wed 14 October**
- **D9999 RYLA 2027 - Applications are OPEN! ...**

The D9999 RYLA Christchurch and Queenstown committees are reaching out to see how your Club is tracking with your candidate selections for RYLA 2027!

Candidates may choose either course, depending on the candidates' age, preferred location, and their availability. It is at the descretion of each committee to consider applicants outside of the stated age range.

● **Christchurch Course: 17–21 January 2027 at College House**

(Ages 18–25) — *Applications close 18 November 2026. Cost \$1,175pp (no GST for Clubs)*

● **Queenstown Course: 31 January – 5 February 2027 at Lakeland Park Camp (Ages 20–30) — *Applications close 30 November 2026. Cost \$1,175pp (no GST for Clubs)***

All information and application packs are readily available on the [Rotary District 9999 Website](#). If you have any questions or need a hand matching a candidate, please don't hesitate to reach out directly to the course Facilitators.

Queenstown Facilitator - Lee-Ann Murray d9999rylaqt@gmail.com
Christchurch Facilitator - Alan Morgan d9999rylachch@gmail.com

Queenstown ONLINE application form [HERE](#)
Christchurch ONLINE application form [HERE](#)

Just a reminder, all candidates must be interviewed and endorsed by the sponsor Rotary Club to be emailed to the course committee. Selection criteria and interview questions are attached.

Also, please reach out to your business community and networks to offer them the opportunity to sponsor one or more of their rising stars within their workplace. Poster attached for each course to share.

Thank you for your ongoing support in empowering our future young leaders!

Pink Ribbon Appeal – Christchurch Airport



Friday
October 16th
2025



Time	Person A	Car Rego	Person B	Car Rego
8:00-10:00am	Athol McCully	HGG740	Diane Peterson	PPG338
10:00-12:00pm	Vayomi Gunasekara	N/A	Alan McKinnon	QEE584
12:00-2:00pm	Alan Stewart	QHC766	Geoff Bailey	LWR792
2:00-4:00pm	Kathryn Dalziel	SAW232	Lynda McKee	NRA720
4:00-5:30pm	Graham Dockrill	RDC721	Mel Opie	MEQ528

Duties:

Duty	14-Oct-26	21-Oct-26	28-Oct-26
Cash Desk	#N/A	L Bougen	G Dockrill
Cash Desk	#N/A	A McKinnon	M Opie
Reception	#N/A	M Bruce	S Mackenzie
Speaker's Host	#N/A	A McCully	#N/A
Grace	#N/A	A McCully	D Buist
International Toast	#N/A	M Bruce	S Mackenzie
Thanks to Speaker	#N/A	A McKinnon	#N/A
Quote for the Week	#N/A	L Bougen	M Opie
Speaker Reporter	A McCully	D Peterson	V Ellis
Sergeant	#N/A	A Stewart	M Bruce

MEET

Leave:

from to

S Haye 11/08/2020 TBA

E Bermingham 01/01/2023 TBA

A Kim 30/06/2025 TBA

M Soares 01/05/2026 04/11/2026

The link for the club web pages is www.christchurchsouthrotary.org.nz

The link to club Facebook pages is
<https://www.facebook.com/ChristchurchSouthRotary>

REMINDERS

Record your apology at the Reception Desk at a prior meeting, OR email: chchsouthrotary@gmail.com before 11.00am Wednesday.

You will get a reminder a couple of days before the meeting re apologising and to advise if bringing a guest.

Emergency apologies to Alan McKinnon (021 142 7668)

OR, Club Secretary Viv Ellis (027 490 3161)

DUTIES If you are unable to carry out your allocated duty, it is YOUR responsibility to arrange a substitute.

Please advise all leave of absence of 3 or more weeks to the Secretary, by email or in writing.