



Oxwords Meeting Report 12.02.08

The meeting began with our Club President, **Richard Grant**, warmly welcoming 8 guests, including Ga Jun from OxFizz, a new community interest company.

Richard then handed over to **Wendy Eccles**, our Toastmaster of the Evening, who was watched by her son, Adam, also a guest at the meeting.

Bob Ely was Table Topics master. He asked us to imagine we had signed up for a series of evening classes and were now halfway through our course - how were we getting on? **Neil Pakenham-Walsh** is doing a course on sculpture and he is inspired by the beautiful, detailed texture of the limestone he is shaping. **Waldy Mahary** is learning how to do flower arranging, and he finds the bright colours of the flowers bring him happiness and delight. **David Cook** is having less success at his line-dancing class, and said that his injury was caused by people who couldn't tell their left from their right. His wife has decided he should come to sequence dancing instead. **Ga Jun** is amazed by his astronomy class and the complexity of patterns he observes in the night sky. He is glad he can share his love of constellations with other like-minded people. **Ning-Ning Li** is learning how to make silver jewellery and she is crafting lots of beautiful gifts for her friends and family. She says it is much more economical and fun than buying jewellery from shops.

Ga Jun then told us about a new enterprise **OxFizz**: They are pioneering a new form of philanthropy. This is based on a simple principle: professionals and skilled persons give up their time and talents to provide a service for a fee. Profits are then passed onto a charity of their choice. Using this principle, OxFizz finds the demand for services, brings the providers and customers together, and generates money for charity. They are already having success with an interview service; for a small fee, candidates can have a mock interview and full feedback session with an expert volunteer from a local business, and all proceeds go to charity.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this unique enterprise see the OxFizz website <http://www.oxfizz.org/about.php>

Michelle Reid gave a round-up of news from our Toastmasters Area 7:

Thamesdown Speakers (Swindon) will be joining us in Area 7 from Area 22 which has become too large and is being reorganised.

The Area Speech and Evaluation contest is on Sunday 31st March at Steventon Village

Hall starting at 1.15pm. Entry will be free and each club will contribute to the food for the event.

Ben Jackson, the current Area Governor, is looking for volunteers to succeed him as the new Area Governor.

The Area 7 clubs are looking at ways to collaborate with local businesses and organisations – for example running a Presidents Night - inviting the leaders and presidents of local organisations to a special club meeting.

After the break, we had prepared speeches:

Jonathan Bradley asked “Customers, Who Cares?” and challenged us to see customer service in a new way. He used lively examples to demonstrate that customers are anybody we need to influence to take an action that will benefit us. Caring for the customer should begin at the very first point they access our service, and to retain them we need to offer good products and a good service, but most of all a good attitude.

Michelle Reid told a tall-tale about her canal boat holiday to Jerrywick in Ireland. She was roped into a local protest, and met some strange local characters with even stranger customs - such as a museum won by a gambler, a switchover ceremony and a ritual of “singing up the dawn”. She wasn’t sure if the place really was left off the tourist map, or if it was real at all.

Paul Arden told us what he did on his holidays; far from relaxing on a beach, he went to China to work with abandoned children. He vividly described the shrieks of delight and excitement of the children in the orphanage when he arrived with toys and drinks for them to enjoy. This was only the start, as he helped in programs that provide education for disabled orphans to enable them to find work. He said that these children need time, expert care, and people willing to give them opportunities. He encouraged us to find out more about Oxford China Action <http://oxfordchinaaction.googlepages.com/>

The speeches were encouragingly evaluated by **Andrew Moss, Colin Walsh and Paul Arden.**

Tuende Szilagyi expertly kept us on track with her time-keeping.

Best Speaker: Michelle Reid

Best Table Topics: David Cook

Best Evaluator: Andrew Moss