

# Season Greetings from Rombo, Kenya

## Rotary Club of Dublin Central

On Christmas day in the sweltering heat I will kneel in our half built church. It is summer here and temperatures can reach 30 degrees. I will pray for my good fortune, that until next June the Rotary clubs of the island of Ireland have decided to consider supporting our projects here in Rombo.

Even though my face will be the only white face in the gathering, the packed church will largely ignore me. Five years later the Maasai have accepted me as one of their own and have given me the name Naraku, meaning brought by children. As a result, thankfully, the women no longer spit at me (a form of Maasai blessing here) and one I am happy to do without.

The Maasai will have walked up to 40 miles to attend and give thanks for what little they have. This always amazes me. Their lives are so difficult and painful. Each year more people die here of hunger than Aids, Malaria, TB and polio combined. And yet, they will come with great hope for the future. They will dress up in all their wonderfully colourful plastic jewellery and bright red dress and walk the long distance, sometimes travelling overnight. They will hold their heads high and walk with great dignity.



With Christmas time upon us, it is a time for reflecting on the year gone by. I would like to thank DG Ray for letting me speak at your Rotary

conference in Cork this year. Although I was nervous, it was a great honour for me to address you all. It was also a great honour for me to be asked to speak at so many Rotary clubs.

Here in Rombo, Kenya, among the Maasai people, Christmas is just another day. A day when the women will still fetch water in their large



drums on their heads, fetch firewood and struggle to provide food for their families. The men will search out new pastures for their animals since we are still experiencing a drought. There is no Santa Claus here, no presents and no turkey. But still the people have great hope that the future will be better for their children.

Christmas is also a time of hope and also a time to look to the future. Rotary's plans to fit out two clinics, build four water wells, a pipeline and fit out three classrooms will help brighten up their future. Improvements in health, clean water and education will change their lives for the better. Thank you all so very much for your support. Without your help I could not help the people of Rombo.

So from all the community here in Rombo to all the Rotary members we say 'Ashe Olong' meaning thank you very much and we wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and New Year.

*Elaine - Naraku.*

## Donaghadee Rotarians Prepare for Christmas

As Christmas draws near the members of Donaghadee Rotary Club like everyone else have stepped up a few gears as regards their service to the community. On Thursday night at the weekly meeting President Garth Arnold inducted a new member (actually a recycled former member.) David Cochrane.

Deposed Emperor Mark Brooks with his own brand of scintillating sarcasm and rapid repartee proposed David. Mark informed the Club that David had been working for Belfast City Council's Parks and Cemeteries Section for the last 27 years and was involved in Grounds Maintenance supervision, procurements and, more recently, in co-ordinating the Apprenticeship Gardeners Scheme, including the setting up of more extensive training within the Parks and Cemeteries Section. David was one of the foundation members of Donaghadee Rotary Club, press-ganged by Jackie McKeag in 1994. He was Environment Officer 1997-1998 during which time he was involved with the planting of young trees in green spaces around Donaghadee. He was also involved with the Charity Row to Portpatrick in August 1998. He is a married man with 3 daughters.

After his induction, which took the customary form, David thanked the members for accepting him as a member. David then pointed out that the standard of dress had fallen badly since the formation of the club, and used photographic evidence to prove this.

After the meeting the club members wrapped some 300 Selection Boxes to be distributed by Santa from his Grotto in the old Post Office Donaghadee over the next two Saturdays.

On Friday evening the Rotary Club assisted the Town Traders with their Donaghadee Town Centre Evening. The club members provided a Santa, a sledge and an American style Secret Service escort for Santa on his tour of the town.



On Saturday the club members were to be found assisting Santa in his recently constructed Grotto in the old Post Office. Santa will be in residence again on the 15th and 22nd Dec. The Selection Boxes will be given to children visiting Santa in the Grotto. All children will be welcome. Any voluntary donations will be given to the Shine-A-Light charity, which helps children with cancer.

On Sunday Donaghadee Rotary Club and Donaghadee Male Voice Choir held their 9th Annual Christmas Service in Donaghadee Parish Church. The club members would like to thank the Male Voice Choir and the Rector Ian R Gamble for their participation in the service. Over £300 was raised for Rotary charities.