

Rotary Bulletin – 2 March 2026

RYDA

16-20 March. 4 people needed per day. Contact Nigel Withell.

Youth Music Festival

23 May 2026.

Circus Quirkus

28 May two shows at PNBHS – timing being confirmed.

Red Tulip Walk in the Manawatu

Saturday 11 April, The Square. Walk to support World Parkinson's Day.



Monday lunchtime 9 March 2026

Guest Speaker: Dr Hilary Smith

“45 Years at Volunteer Service Abroad – a personal perspective”

Intro/Thanks	Nigel Withell
Sergeant	John Freebairn
Corporal	Brian Donnelly
Parting Thought	Martin Townend
Bulletin Editor	Dave Gaynor
Attendance	Stu Schwartz

Merger of PN and Awapuni Rotary Clubs

After meeting together for many months, the Awapuni Rotary Club members and the Board of Palmerston North Rotary Club have agreed to join together formally.

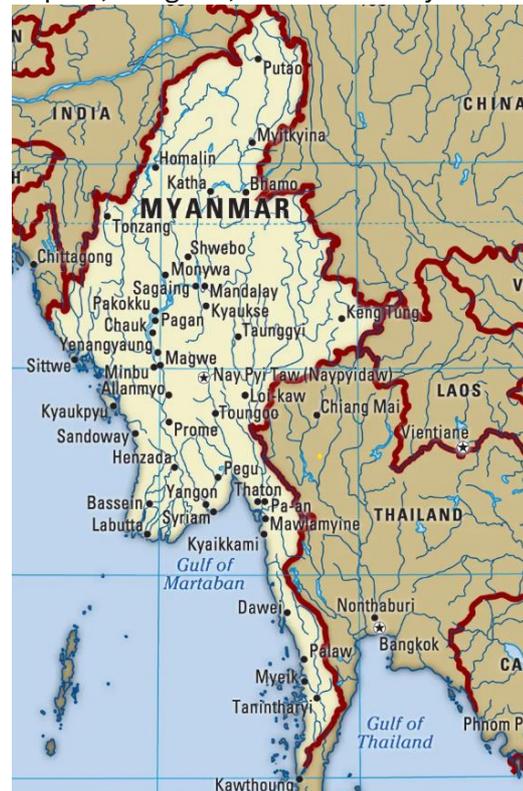
The members of PN Rotary now need to formally agree at the meeting on 9 March to the following resolution (which Awapuni has already agreed to):

That the members, having considered the proposed merger between the Rotary Club of Awapuni (Club No. 18596) and the Rotary Club of Palmerston North (Club No. 18626), hereby approve the submission of a merger proposal to Rotary International through the District Governor of District 9940 for approval in principle, confirm their intention (subject to Rotary International approval and compliance with applicable legal requirements) that the Rotary Club of Palmerston North be the continuing club and that the Rotary

Club of Awapuni surrender its charter effective 30 June 2026 with members in good standing transferring accordingly, and authorise the President and Secretary to sign all necessary documentation and take all steps required to give effect to this proposal.

Summary John Brunsdon's Speech Myanmar – a personal perspective.

John Brunsdon spoke about his recent trip to **Myanmar**, prompted by an invitation from a friend who works at the New Zealand Embassy there. He began with an overview of the country's **geography**, noting its borders with Thailand, Laos, China, India, and Bangladesh, and mentioned that the former capital, Rangoon, is now officially called **Yangon**.



He then provided a **historical summary**:

- Myanmar was invaded by Japan during WWII and gained independence from Britain afterward.
- Early leader **Aung San** was assassinated, leading to decades of military rule beginning in 1948.
- Pro-democracy figure **Aung San Suu Kyi**, Aung San's daughter, rose to prominence during

1988 protests and spent many years under house arrest.

- After a brief period of democratic reform from 2011, the military again seized control in **2021**, triggering unrest, mass displacement, and the creation of armed resistance groups. The military now controls roughly **40%** of the country.

John described the **current situation** as one of widespread conflict, with the military advantaged by access to aircraft and heavy weaponry. He also discussed significant **Chinese influence**, including economic and political involvement across multiple factions.

He shared impressions of **Yangon**, including run-down buildings, abandoned hotels, and limited tourism, which has declined by up to 98%.



Despite this, he noted that some aspects of infrastructure—like internet, taxis, and basic services—still function relatively well.

John then spoke about his travels to **Bagan**, a famous region with thousands of pagodas. Once home to dozens of daily tourist balloon flights, now only one or two operate.

He showed images of pagodas, hotels, and the Irrawaddy River, mentioning the surreal experience of hearing distant explosions while dining.



He also visited the **Shan State** hill station, describing cold weather, neglected colonial-era buildings, and vibrant local markets. A subsequent trip to **Inle Lake** revealed floating farms—especially tomato production—and communities living entirely on the water. He also found a high-altitude vineyard, one of the few in Myanmar.



John touched on the country's complex **ethnic landscape**, including the Rohingya near Bangladesh and other groups from Shan State, some of whom he teaches as refugees in New Zealand.

He mentioned **Chinese-built oil and gas pipelines** crossing contested territory—strikingly untouched due to China supplying arms to multiple sides.

John concluded by showing a map of current conflict zones, which cover nearly the entire country except the central region where he travelled. When asked, he said he personally felt **safe**, largely because he stayed in those more stable areas and flew between destinations.

Parting Thought: President Norelle:

How can you take that little bit of time for yourself to make yourself feel refreshed so you can step back into space again and be available when you need it?

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FOR
GOOD