



CHARTER NO. 4377
23RD AUGUST 1937
R.I. DISTRICT 3201

OFFICE
ROTARY CLUB OF COCHIN
BALBHAVAN
PANAMPILLY NAGAR, KOCHI- 682 036
PHONE: 0484 7963023
email: rotarycochin2013@gmail.com
website: www.rotarycochin.com

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NEXT MEETING

Wednesday
2nd April 2025
at 07.00 PM
at Rotary Cochin Balbhavan

Speaker:
Rtn. PP Dr. Sujit Vasudevan



BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF COCHIN

Volume 89, Issue 37, 26th March 2025

THE COCHIN ROTARIAN

RIDING THE MEMORY TRAIN: A JOURNEY OF LEGACY, DESIGN, AND PURPOSE

By Paul John Kuttukaran | Rotary Guest Speaker



It was his first time attending a Rotary meeting, and Paul John Kuttukaran began with gratitude—thanking President Rajesh for the invitation and acknowledging the warmth of familiar faces in the audience. What followed was a deeply personal and inspiring journey through family legacy, artistic upbringing, professional pivots, and the birth of a unique design brand—Memory Train.

Hailing from the well-known Kuttukaran Group, Paul is the grandson of visionary entrepreneur K.P. Paul, who built an automotive enterprise in Kerala at a time when the state was considered challenging terrain for business. Paul recounted how his grandfather's values—trust, service, and patience—continue to guide the family and its ventures.

But Paul's own journey has been anything but conventional. Growing up in a home rich with art, travel, and music, courtesy of his parents John

and Charlotte, he spent his childhood immersed in a miniature world crafted from souvenirs—tiny ships, wooden dolls, and ceramic houses. “While most kids played cricket or video games, I created worlds,” he said. “Looking back, I think the Memory Train began right there.”

His formative years at Lovedale's boarding school in the Nilgiris instilled patience and observation—traits that would shape both his creative and entrepreneurial sensibilities. College life in Mumbai brought with it chaos and creativity, as Paul found himself more often behind a camera than behind a textbook. He became the go-to filmmaker in his class, laying the foundation for a short stint in 3D animation. He even worked on projects like Tinkerbelle, Space Chimps, and the unreleased animated remake of Kuch Kuch Hota Hai—which featured voiceovers from the original Bollywood cast.

Yet, his enduring love for automobiles brought him to Coventry University in the UK—the Mecca of British automotive design—where he interned at Jaguar Land Rover and even designed a modern reinterpretation of Kerala’s houseboats for his final project.

Paul returned to Kerala, worked briefly on ship design and the Water Metro project, and then joined the family group, focusing on brand strategy and digital transformation. One of his proudest achievements during this time was launching India’s first virtual car showroom in 2016.

But a deeper calling stirred. Alongside his wife Megha, Paul moved to Bengaluru to explore experiential design with boutique studio EnterSpace. They worked with clients like Google and Amazon while raising their daughter, Talia. It was during this period—sketching 38 business ideas—that Memory Train finally took shape.

A company rooted in storytelling and cultural memory; Memory Train began with a mission to create soulful, handcrafted souvenirs. The journey wasn’t easy—attempts to source miniatures from China and North India fell short of quality expectations. That’s when Paul remembered a story about his grandfather’s humility in a Chennai spare

parts shop—a story that reminded him of the values needed to push forward.

Eventually, Paul built a local production team in Kochi from the ground up, blending handcrafted techniques with modern technologies like 3D printing. From just 2-3 people in 2023, the team has now grown to around 25.

One of Memory Train’s standout pieces is the Chai Kada—a model inspired by a real-life tea stall run by Vijay Chettan and Mohan Aunty in Gandhinagar. Known for traveling to 27 countries from their humble earnings, their story was immortalized in a miniature piggy bank that quickly became the brand’s best-seller. A portion of its profits now supports the family, making this art form both personal and purposeful.

Memory Train currently offers 40 unique pieces—crafted mostly from resin, with a few in ceramic—each one telling a story rooted in nostalgia, culture, and Kerala’s rich heritage. From temple gates and Theyyam performers to custom projects for Tata Sons, Adani Ports, and medical institutions, Paul’s designs reflect a deep attention to detail and emotional resonance.

Operating predominantly through a Shopify-based e-commerce site, Paul has strategically marketed the brand via Meta ads and performance marketing. Their

pieces are now popular across Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, and increasingly in retail outlets around Fort Kochi and Crosswords.

When asked about constraints, Paul candidly admitted that supply—not demand—has been the recent challenge, primarily due to a shortage of skilled artisans in Kerala. His long-term goal is to create employment opportunities that retain local talent, reversing the creative brain drain to cities like Mumbai and Delhi.

As for what lies ahead, Paul envisions scaling up production, entering the UAE and Gulf markets, and possibly expanding into global exports through trade fairs. “We’re working to blend craftsmanship and technology in new ways,” he shared. “There’s a lot of potential waiting to be tapped.”

The Rotary audience was captivated—not just by the intricacies of the craft, but by Paul’s heartfelt storytelling and vision. In the words of Acting Secretary Rtn Srikantan Suryanarayan, “This was an eye-opener into how design, childhood memories, and 3D printing can create magic.”

As the evening ended, one thing was clear: Memory Train isn’t just a product—it’s an emotion. And Paul John Kuttukaran is driving it forward with creativity, compassion, and legacy at its core.

SKARA BRAE: ECHOES FROM EUROPE’S OLDEST VILLAGE

By Mr. Stephen Sage (Our former member)

On the western edge of Scotland’s Orkney Islands, swept by salt winds and overlooking the wild Atlantic, lies one of the most remarkable archaeological treasures of the prehistoric world—Skara Brae. This ancient village, remarkably intact and rich

with clues about its past inhabitants, provides an unparalleled glimpse into Neolithic life. Thought to have been constructed around 3500 BC and continuously occupied until roughly 2500 BC, Skara Brae predates both Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids

of Giza, making it not only one of the oldest settlements in Europe but also one of the most intriguing.

A Fortuitous Discovery

Skara Brae remained hidden for millennia beneath layers of sand

and earth, preserved in a natural time capsule. Its modern rediscovery came in 1850, after a particularly fierce storm battered the coastline and stripped the grass from a large mound, revealing walls and structures buried underneath. The farmer who first stumbled upon the site could scarcely have imagined its historical significance. Later excavations, particularly those led by archaeologist Gordon Childe in the 1920s and 30s, brought the full extent of the settlement to light.

What they uncovered stunned the world: a village of ten connected stone houses, complete with household furnishings, passageways, and an early sewer system—constructed and occupied thousands of years ago by people who, despite lacking modern tools or metals, demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and craftsmanship.

Architecture of the Ancients

Each dwelling at Skara Brae is built from flat slabs of stone, locally quarried and fitted together without the use of mortar. The homes were sunken into the earth to protect against Orkney's relentless winds and cold, with turf or midden (domestic waste) packed around the walls for insulation.

Inside, a sense of domestic order prevails. Most houses follow a similar layout—around 40 square meters in area—with a central square hearth for warmth and cooking, stone bed enclosures on either side,

and a dresser facing the doorway, possibly used to display valuable or ceremonial items. These features suggest not only comfort and functionality but also a shared cultural standard and possibly even status consciousness.

One of Skara Brae's most astonishing features is its early sanitation system. Several of the houses were

edge of their environment.

Importantly, no weapons have been found at the site, and the settlement itself is not in a defensible position—unusual for prehistoric communities. This suggests that Skara Brae may have been a peaceful society, free from the threat of invasion or warfare, and relatively secure in its remote island setting.



A Vanishing Community

Why Skara Brae was abandoned remains a mystery. Around 2500 BC, something changed. Some scholars suggest a dramatic sandstorm might have forced the inhabitants to flee, covering their village with sand and debris and rendering it uninhabitable. Others believe the desertion was part of a gradual shift—perhaps

due to climate change, soil exhaustion, or changing social structures.

Interestingly, the period marking the village's decline coincides with the rise of ceremonial sites nearby, such as the Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar, indicating a transformation in the spiritual or cultural priorities of the people. As village life gave way to monumental architecture, it's possible that the society evolved, placing greater emphasis on communal or religious identity over domestic life.

Legacy and Significance

Today, Skara Brae is celebrated not just for its antiquity, but for its humanity. In walking through the

connected by small drains, some of which appear to have functioned as toilets, using water to flush waste outside the settlement—an extraordinary level of sophistication for its time.

The Lives of the Villagers

Though we can only speculate about the lives of Skara Brae's inhabitants, the artefacts they left behind offer tantalizing insights. Excavations have unearthed stone tools, bone needles, pottery, gaming dice, beads, and even carved decorative objects that may have held religious or ritual significance. The villagers were likely farmers, hunters, and fishers, sustaining themselves with a varied diet and an intimate knowl-

low stone walls and ducking through narrow passageways, visitors are transported back in time. They see not just ruins, but the living quarters of real people—families who cooked meals, shared stories, raised children, and weathered storms just as we do today.

The site was rightly named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, alongside other Neolithic landmarks

on Orkney. It serves as a reminder that even in the distant past, people were capable of remarkable innovation, social cohesion, and adaptation to their environment.

As archaeological techniques evolve and more is uncovered, Skara Brae continues to whisper secrets from across millennia—of a people who built not only structures of stone, but a legacy of resilience, craftsmanship, and community spirit.

EVERY DROP TELLS A STORY

March 22 – World Water Day

Water is everywhere — in rivers and rain, in the air we breathe, in the cells of our bodies. It's so constant, so quietly present, that we often forget how powerful it truly is. And how precious.

On World Water Day, we pause to remember that water is not just a resource. It is life itself.

It nurtures every crop, fuels every industry, cleans every wound, and quenches every thirst. And yet, despite its universality, water is not universally available. One in four people around the world lacks access to safe drinking water. For many, clean water is not a tap away — it's a long, uncertain walk.

This year, as we reflect on what water means to us, we must also confront a difficult truth: we're running out of time. Climate change is altering rainfall patterns, depleting groundwater, and triggering droughts where once there were streams. Pollution is choking rivers and poisoning lakes. And while some parts of the world wrestle with scarcity, others waste millions of liters a day.

But hope, like water, finds a way. Across the world, communities are rising — harvesting rainwater, reviving ancient wells, cleaning up local waterways, and using technology to manage this shared gift with care. These are not massive global interventions. They're small, committed acts by people who understand that change begins close to home.

Water teaches us many things — resilience, flow, patience, strength. Perhaps the greatest lesson it offers is this: what we choose to protect today determines who we become tomorrow.

So let us protect our rivers, our lakes, our oceans — and the unseen, underground streams that sustain life from below. Let us treat water not as a commodity, but as a companion. Because in the end, we don't just need water to live — we need to learn to live with water.



Rtn. IPP Prakash D. Aswani

27 Mar

Rtn. K.S. Vasanth Kumar

31 Mar



Rtn. Porinju Veliyath / Rtne. Litty

27 Mar

Rtn. WgCdr K. Chandrasekhar / Rtne. Santha

30 Mar

Rtn. Kurian C. George / Rtne. Betsy

02 Apr

Rtn. Dr. George Cherady / Rtne. Lekha

02 Apr