

'The Butler Did It!' - Impressions of 'The Mousetrap', Thursday 17th April

"Very well done," said Brian, using his professional judgment. "I think they were all miked-up," said Margaret, "because you could hear every word. And they didn't fluff any lines." Although, I thought, they've probably done it a few times before!

"Funny," said David Rooke, "we saw it 43 years ago in London and you'd have thought they'd have caught the villain by now." He went on to say he hoped to see it again in another 43 years but I told him he was an optimist—it probably wouldn't run that long.

The theatre was packed, the play was entertaining, and who would have guessed the ending? Though Sylvia did, at half-time. But I suppose it won't do any harm to reveal here that the crime was committed by....aaargghh!!
- [pw]

We've seen Gwen & Brian Harbourne's new wheelchair-friendly car, and the *Birmingham Mail* printed a nice little piece about it on 29 March. There was a good photograph and details of the car, a Fiat Qubo, specially adapted by Sirius Automotive at Wednesbury.

And here's your Editor yet again, this time pontificating on BBC-2!

Well, not this month anyway, but I'm supposed to appear in May in a programme provisionally titled 'The True Story of Science Fiction', though it will probably morph into something entirely different by the time they've finished with it.

Slightly against my better judgment I recently went along to a studio in a back-street in Bristol to be interviewed about my life-long interest in science fiction. I'd better hastily add that to me this means primarily written material, not the sort of 'sci-fi' stuff - 'Star Trek' and so on, of which we see so much on TV and cinema. As I tried to explain to the man behind the camera, when I began to read SF as a teenager it was pretty universally ridiculed because no-one believed in crazy ideas like men on the moon, even though much of it was being written by people like Arthur C. Clarke (father of the communications satellite) who really knew what they were talking about.

Once Sputnik went up things began to change, of course, and eventually the mass-media realised that SF was jam-packed with concepts that could be put onto the big screen, and the result was 'Star Wars', 'ET', 'Blade Runner' and all the rest.

It was an interesting experience to see something of what goes on in a TV studio, even though it all seemed a bit amateurish to me - on several occasions we had to stop filming because someone was knocking on the doors to get in or a car alarm was going off. The other guests were mixed lot—a couple of 'costumers' who travel around dressing-up at conventions, a Star-Trek man and various others. I'm expecting to come across as just an elderly 'talking head' - if I don't get cut completely!
- [pw]

MAKING YOUR APOLOGIES

If you are unable to attend a General Meeting please advise **Mike Terry** by the **Sunday** before.

If you won't be able to carry out your duties on the Kitchen Rota please try and 'swap' with someone from the following month, and advise **Graham Jones** of the change.

If you can't provide the Newsletter Report or deliver the Vote of Thanks please get in touch with me, **Peter Weston**, before the meeting concerned (pr.weston@btinternet.com).

And finally, a very quick note to say that I always welcome your comments on the Newsletter!



Sutton Park Probus Club

(Founded 1998)

President: Rod Crowley

Newsletter

No.185

April 2014

March Speaker:

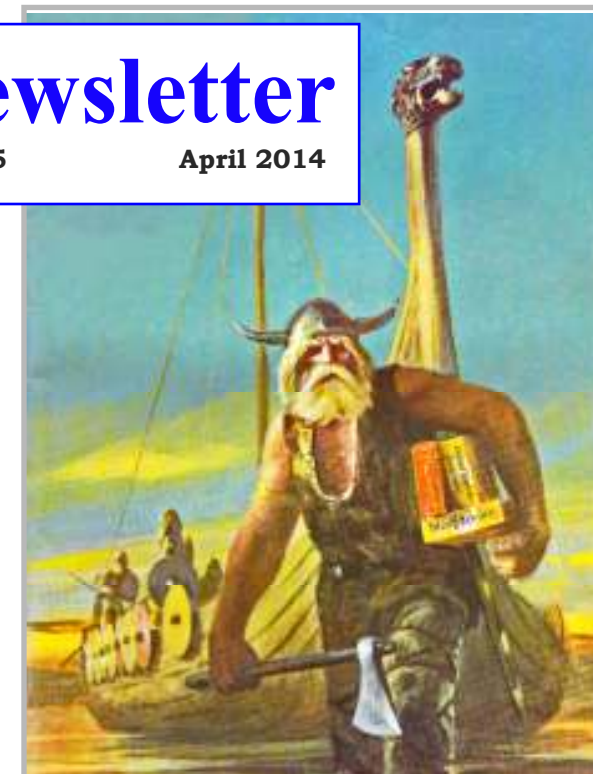
'The History of English to 1381

(not as boring as it sounds)'

By Mrs Carol Millin

Report by Keith Keeley

*Fanciful illustration
to show the way that the
English language
has been brought to our
shores by various
invaders! [pw]*



Picture notwithstanding, no-one is seriously suggesting that the Vikings or anyone else arrived carrying dictionaries of English, but over generations the effect was very much the same as if they did. Successive invasions have added layer after layer of vocabulary to our language, the results of which can still be found today.

Carol Millin gave us a talk on the development of English up to 1381 when the peasants were revolting - I thought we always had been! But whatever we might have thought about the subject, she certainly was not boring. Her delivery was like a rocket, just fizzing for a second then taking off and increasing speed by the minute - facts came like lightning.

I was prepared with two pens (one always fails at a crucial moment) and paper but I found it very difficult trying to keep up. I had not realised before how much I relied upon my poor hearing being supported by partial lip-reading, which is not possible if one is writing. Later I discovered that watching the Speaker and writing at the same time causes my writing to deteriorate to an extent that even I could not read it. Perhaps this is fortunate since if you were present a "word for word" account would not be of too much value. *Cont/d....*

However, those absent might be interested to know that Carol explained how a series of invasions and other events influenced the language spoken. St Augustine came to teach Christianity in AD 597 and introduced various Latin terms, the Vikings invaded in AD 793 and in AD 878 the Danes turned up. (Confusingly they sometimes seem to be called 'Vikings'. Perhaps there was not a word for 'Scandinavians' at the time).

All these incursions affected the language used in various parts of England since these illegal immigrants did not all land or stay in the same place. More recent arrivals are all in Birmingham of course.

In the opinion of our speaker, 14th October 1066 was the "Blackest day in English History" when poor Harold was defeated by William ('the Bastard'). As a result Norman French became the upper-crust official language. After that, everything changed for the worst, the Saxon people lost their lands and their status (being reduced to little more than serfs) while William's cronies were given titles and possessions. The language, too, received a new layer of influence, with Norman words appearing such as 'army', 'soldier', 'guard', 'crown', 'throne', 'duke', and so on. It was no accident, our speaker told us, that these were martial, warlike words. England became very much a two-tier society and the influence of the Normans lingers to this day.

Carol, it seemed, did not much like the French and had a particular dislike for William the Conqueror and at this point you could feel the audience warming to her. She said this change of language produced two levels of society, the wealthy elite and the peasants. Bit like Probus in a way – the elite with all their new Jaguars — and the rest of us [*with old Jaguars - pw*]. Mrs Millin touched on the effects of the plague of 1348 which was so devastating that about 30,000 of the then-70,000 inhabitants of London died. The disease spread through the country, greatly reducing the population, and the consequent loss of labour to carry out the necessary work led to an increase in wages and improvement in the standard of living and mobility. Those on the move took their local words and expressions with them, of course.

This was a thoroughly enjoyable talk, emphasised by the applause following the vote of thanks so ably given by Mike Lock.
- Keith Keeley

April Speaker: Baginton Aerodrome & the Midland Air Museum Presented by Mr Barrie James, museum chairman & curator

I know Baginton - Coventry - Airport, of course, we flew from there some years ago on a Thomsons package holiday (and what a shambles at the terminal!). But those days are long gone—the airport was closed in 2009 before re-opening for commercial traffic only.

What I *didn't* know was the history—the fact that it was the site of an Armstrong-Whitworth factory once employing 12,000 people, which built Lancasters, Hunters, Javelins and so on, that it was a WWII fighter station, and that the Midland Air Museum has been based there for some 46 years.

This is a self-funding charity which supports over 50 historic aircraft, including a restored Vulcan B2, English Electric Canberra PR3, two Lightnings, two Gloster Meteors, Vampire, Sea-Vixen, Starfighter, Phantom, etc. There is also a rare Blue Steel missile, from Britain's cancelled ICBM programme and it is home to the Sir Frank Whittle Jet Heritage Centre. The club will be visiting the museum on 12th June but in the meantime Barrie James promises to give us a fascinating taste of what we shall see then. [pw]

Thursday 10th April, Pub Amble in the Park, led by Roy Willson



It was a beautiful day for our walk in the park, starting and finishing at Park House and covering most of the territory up towards Streetly Gate, past the Jamboree Stone once again and back to base after a stretch which members accused Roy of having been considerably more than the stipulated three miles! Given the warm weather, the easy, dry terrain, and the close vicinity it was surprising that only a dozen turned up for the walk, with Rita being the 'token woman' and Tony winning first prize for 'Most well-prepared for a tropical downpour'.

Yes, we saw the ponies—funny how you can never find them when you deliberately go looking for them, isn't it? Tony asked if I wanted a picture of the front end or the back-end of the horse; I detected a witticism developing somewhere in that agile mind, and wisely went for the safe option! [pw]

'CRUTCHES TO THE FORE'— Doing the London Marathon (again!)



Despite the vagaries of a new STAR (Scandinavian Total Ankle Replacement) ankle replacement and a serious lack of training, last weekend I lined up with the 13 Ever-presents on Blackheath's Green Start for the 34th London Marathon (my 39th). In glorious sunshine, a light breeze and an ideal temperature of 14°C I crossed the start line hoping to finish 26.2 miles in the Mall under the eight hours cut-off time. The crowds had heard about the Ever-presents and chanted me all the way to the finish with Da-yul! Da-yul! Da-yul!

I eventually did it crutch-aided in 7 hours, 12 minutes, 39 seconds, well inside my target time and actually enjoyed it. That is until I crossed the line and was hung with the best London Marathon medal ever but then the achilles seized and the heel blister burst and the toes bled – a relatively small price to pay for a lovely day and the right result.

All the other 13 Ever-presents headed me home and I even managed to raised some funds for AgeUK as I might need their support sometime soon! Roll on 2015 – in a wheelchair perhaps?

Run statistics; Overall position, 35,519th. In the age category 70+, 131st. Behind me (at the cut-off) – 248 (including Batman!). Winner = Wilson Kipsang, in 2hrs. 4 mins. and a bit.
- Dale Lyons

'The Membership Page'— President Rod said that the success of SPPC is due to the quality of its people, and this is the spot where we invite members to write about their lives, interests, activities or professions. This time it's the turn of our Past President from 2008/2009. - pw

THE CHEQUERED LIFE OF JOHN BUCKLAND—SO FAR

I arrived on 4th November 1938 into the wealthy up-market district of Handsworth, and in my early years became a campanologist and learned to ring the bells at Bishop Latimers' Church in Winson Green. Brian Mallett was a choir boy and I don't know who made most noise!

After church we used to meet in the Boulton Arms pub for a noisy game of 'penny knock'. One of my friends from those days was the son of a warder at the prison, and we often went on long cycle trips to YHA hostels. He is now a catholic priest, but rather than follow in his footsteps at the tender age of 15 I joined Birmingham City Police force as cadet #41.

At seventeen I volunteered to join the RAF Police, and spent the next two years guarding the Valiant bomber squadron at Wittering, near Peterborough. Around this time they were conducting A-bomb tests on Christmas Island, where Fred Nightingale was stationed.

During my time in the RAF I passed my driving test but it wasn't the normal test; first it was in a police Land Rover, and secondly, we had to know the sequences of runway lights and aircraft crash-procedures. However, on Saturday nights I drove around the streets of Peterborough looking for drunken RAF personnel.

After being demobbed I re-joined the Birmingham police force as constable #111, patrolling the beat around Alum Rock and Stechford. After five years, and a particularly bad New Year's night when I fell off my bike twice on the ice (no Panda cars in those days!) I decided on a career change to become a salesman (they always seemed to have nice cars, suits, and girlfriends to die for). After a few false starts I eventually commenced a new career with Guests at West Bromwich, selling heavy lorries and trucks for the Ford Motor company. This involved my having to take a commercial vehicle test, after which I could legally drive monster trucks on the road. I subsequently sold fuel tankers, tippers, Luton vans and pigeon-transporters, fleets of vans to Sandwell council and cars to West Bromwich building society.

At weekends I was navigator on many car-rallies in the Welsh forests. I have climbed out of cars on their side in ditches, searched for two hours for a lost wheel in a ploughed field, and ruined the engine on a new Ford Cortina. I enjoyed competing in Autotests, throwing a car as fast as possible around a circuit comprising of cones, which saw me roll over in a Ford 105E Anglia. It was not a pretty sight, you just cannot spin a car while in top speed in reverse!

Eventually I decided to change direction again and while still sales-oriented I trained as a financial advisor and spent the next twenty years giving advice on pensions, investments, insurance and so on, before retiring to play bowls where I was introduced to SPPC and, as they say, life will never be the same again!

In 1963 I married Pat and together we have produced two fine sons, who have in turn provided us with four grandchildren. Steven lives in Barton under Needwood, and Martin and his family now live in Sydney, Australia.

- John Buckland



Thursday 3rd April - 'Over the Hill at Brailes' Report on the Long Walk by Brian Mallett, photos by Rita Rooke

*'Twas in a village called Brailes
That Geoff led a party, boys and
gails*

*Sixteen keen and active folk
Good for a laugh, many a joke*

*'Climbing hills, cross six stiles
How far, you say, 'bout five
miles*

*Did we fall, slip or cuss
You bet we did, we're Probus'*



We were very keen to get started as Geoff had promised us fine views once we climbed a minor incline and indeed there would have been spectacular views except that a pall of Saudi smog had descended on middle England. There was plenty of firm ground for us, which added to the pleasure of the walk for ascending/descending can be very time-consuming and tiring when encountering thick mud.

When we approached the second climb we were met on the other side of the fence by a herd of sheep running downhill at a fair speed who presumably had mistaken us for vegetarians bringing their breakfast. Our mid-morning coffee and biscuits break (thanks Carol, though I do prefer the home-made biscuits) was taken in a typical Cotswold village: think of The Slaughters to get the



idea.

It was a steady, comfortable walk through attractive countryside and no rain. Good company made it an ideal day out. The food at the pub was so good that no-one was able to manage a pudding and I think that must be a 'first'. Our thanks to Geoff and Sheila for their planning and

Diary of events and activities to July 2014

Thursday 24th April Club AGM

Newsletter Report; Peter Weston

Kitchen Rota;
Barry Gill, Brian Mallett,
Ian Scholes, Graham Jones,
John Carrington

Thursday 1st May
‘Kenilworth Castle’,
Long Walk organised by Bob Badham

Thursday 15th May
Pub Amble
Led by Roy Willson

Sunday 18th May
‘Voices & Brass’ Concert
John Cheale, co-ordinator

Thursday 22nd May
Club meeting: ‘Baginton Aerodrome
& the Midland Air Museum’
Speaker: Mr Barrie James
Newsletter Report; Dale Lyons
Vote of Thanks: Neil Crabb

Kitchen Rota:
Ivor Wesley, Ray Clark,
Jim Bailey, Tony Ferneyhough,
Peter Weston

Friday 23rd May
Elvis Presley on Stage,
Harry Medcalf, co-ordinator

Thursday 29th May
Visit to the Black Country Museum
Mike Gospel, co-ordinator

Thursday 5th June
Long Walk led by Barry Gill

Thursday 12th June
Visit to Baginton Aerodrome
John Cheale, co-ordinator

Tuesday 17– Tuesday 24th June
Early Summer Break to Croatia
Organised by Brian Mallett

Thursday 19th June
Pub Amble
Led by Fred Nightingale &
Alfred Wallwork

Thursday 24th June
Club meeting:
‘Bringing Theatre to Africa’
Speaker; Ian Appleby
Newsletter Report: Brian Mallett
Vote of Thanks: David Roy

Kitchen Rota:
Dennis Rose, Ernest Williams,
Brian Harbourne,
Fred Nightingale, Brian Nicholas

Thursday 3rd July
Visit to Bourton-on-the-Water &
Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway
Organised by John Cheale

Thursday 10th July
Long Walk led by Graham Jones

Friday 11th July
President’s Supper
at Swinfen Hall

Thursday 17th July
Pub Amble
led by Fred Ditchfield

Thursday 24th July
Club meeting; ‘My Visit to
Afghanistan’
Speaker: Mrs Erica Perkins
Newsletter Report: Ken Shaw
Vote of Thanks; Mike Taylor

Kitchen Rota:
Selby Betts, John Buckland,
Neil Crabb, Brian Senior,
Brian Spencer

Thursday 1st May; Long Walk around Kenilworth Castle Led by Bob Badham

Now that everything has dried-out we can enjoy our long-postponed walk around the area of Kenilworth Castle. Commencing from the castle entrance this will be a six-mile gentle circular walk across flat farmland and open countryside with no stiles. There is a free car park by the Castle and also a pay-&-display by the Queen & Castle pub, where we will take lunch. Meet at 10.00am to commence at 10.30am; please advise me if you wish to take part.
- Bob Badham

Thursday 15th May, Pub Amble led by Roy Willson

We start from the Horse & Jockey, Freeford, on the A51 Tamworth-Lichfield Road about a half-mile south-east of Lichfield. The walk is about 3½ miles, mostly on farm tracks and country lanes. There are no stiles. Meet in the pub car-park to set off at 10.30, returning for lunch by 12.30. Based on past experience the food at this restaurant is excellent, and two courses with coffee are available for £14.95. The board will be out at the next meeting since I need to advise numbers in advance.
- Roy Willson

Sunday 18th May; ‘Voices & Brass’ Concert at Sutton Town Hall Organised by John Cheale

Once again we will have a presence at the charity concert organised by Sutton Vesey Rotary Club at the town hall, commencing at 7.30 pm. Those who came to last year’s event will remember an evening of superb music from the Gresley Male Voice Choir and the Birmingham Schools Brass Band. Bookings have already been taken at previous meetings but contact me to see if tickets may still be available.
- John Cheal

Friday 23rd May; ‘Elvis Presley on Stage’ at Symphony Hall Organised by Harry Medcalf

What was it like to experience an Elvis concert in Las Vegas? Those who were there say it was the pinnacle of entertainment – a ticket that was hard to be had – the biggest and best show in Sin City. Now, in celebration of the 60th Anniversary of Rock & Roll and Elvis’ first recording session we too can see ‘ELVIS PRESLEY – ON STAGE’.

Using the latest technology Elvis performs via state-of-the art video screens singing lead vocals backed by a live band, singers and an orchestra. Together, this multi-media creation puts the audience inside an Elvis Presley concert and creates the illusion that Elvis is on stage for one of his finest performances, as seen in the epic music documentary filmed on location in Las Vegas, ‘Elvis: That’s the Way It Is.’ The show commences at 8.00pm.
Cancellation; my two tickets are available! [pw]
- Harry Medcalf

Thursday 29th May: Visit to the Black Country Living Museum Organised by Mike Gospel

This is an open-air museum of rebuilt historic buildings close to Dudley Castle which occupies some 26 acres of former industrial land partly reclaimed from a former railway goods yard, disused lime kilns and coal pits. Our visit includes a talk in the school-room, a trip on the canal and a venture down the coal-mine. The board will be out at the April meeting, cost is £16.20.
- Mike Gospel

BOWLS MATCH; Can I remind all bowlers that we have our Annual bowls match at home against Aldridge Probus club on Tuesday May 6th at 1-45pm. Last year at Aldridge we had a very poor turn-out, so I am looking for 20 players for this year’s match.
- Barry Parsonage