



**Thursday 11th August, Long
Walk in Worcestershire**
Report by Geoff Silvester
Photo by Rita Rooke

Fifteen of us set out from Salwarpe along the towpath of the recently re-opened Droitwich canal which was very scenic and comfortable to walk. We were led by Dorothy for the first half

as Brian is not yet 100%, although he has made huge strides forward towards full fitness.

We then turned north from the canal, following meandering paths through pastures and freshly harvested wheatfields until we arrived at the Bowling Green Pub, having covered about 4.5 miles, where Brian was waiting for us to lead the second half of the walk.

After liquid and food levels had been replenished we set off again only to find a rather large bull and herd of cows in our path, and on our approach they became agitated so we decided the best course of action was to beat a hasty retreat. After a slight detour we continued on across pastures and quiet country lanes, where some of us went back to our youth and did a bit of scrumping from the hedgerows, collecting plums, greengages and blackberries.

The final part took us on a path across the largest wheatfield I have ever seen, which we followed until we reached a very splendid property that had been converted into expensive apartments. The views were gorgeous, as they had been all day. We arrived back at the cars where Brian and Dorothy were thanked for a very pleasant walk which although in excess of 8 miles had felt more like a gentle stroll. Well done to both!

- Geoff Silvester

A problem of our own making!

Eileen and I are moving house in the next few months and as well as the usual traumas we have a problem all of our own; what to do with the books! Since I was a teenager I've collected science fiction titles, not as madly as many of my friends but running to hundreds of volumes nonetheless, mostly hardcovers. And over the years neither of us has ever been able to walk past a second-hand bookshop which has added countless works on history, biography, popular science and the American Civil War, not to mention the novels.

This is all well and good up to a point but now we're moving to a somewhat smaller house and there just won't be room. So how do we thin them out? I used to think my offspring would be grateful to beg books off me but no joy there, and to the grandchildren they're just something from a dead tree. The second-hand market has collapsed for all but antiquarian and specialist titles, no-one wants them on eBay, and so we're just left with the charity shops.

Of course we won't dispose of everything - not my favourite SF authors, nor my precious old *Astounding* magazines, and Eileen likes to re-read her own favourites.... Clearly, this isn't going to be an easy one to resolve, and I'll let you know how we get on!

[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).



Sutton Park Probus Club

(Founded 1998)

President: John Fellows

Newsletter

No. 189

August 2014

Summer Barbecue at the Fellows Sunday 3rd August





Above; Couple of Mafia bosses?

Right: Ready for Mardi Gras!

Bottom; Bright enough for you, John?

Photos by Tony; lots more on the website.

This was the third barbecue I've been to, and I think the best yet. Weather held up well, warm and dry with a nice breeze, and our fears about the steel band were unfounded, Alf, it was relaxed, melodious, and best of all, not too loud.

President John was in fine form and was seen laughing, joking, and flashing those white legs in the conga-line (Marlene, get the fake tan!), while his 'Carmen Miranda' hat from last year made a brief reappearance. Meanwhile Mike Terry sported a more villainous line in headgear, complete with his 'Rasta' dreadlocks and shades. Together, he and Brian Mallett looked a bit, well, shady!



John had requested bright colours for the day, which I took as my cue to haul out the Hawaiian shirt from the back of the wardrobe. But Eileen took one look at me and said, "you're not going in *that*", so I passed on the challenge. Winner of the loudest shirt was possibly Mike Gospel (green) or Fred D. (Waikiki Beach scene), though there was strong competition. The ladies, as ever, looked fresh and bright in the best possible taste. Great day, John, and thanks to all those who helped. [pw]

WELCOME TO PAUL BEAUMONT, WHO RE-JOINED THE CLUB IN JULY



Paul was born in Holloway, North London (not the Prison) in 1931 and moved with his parents to Birmingham in 1940. He attended both Handsworth and Birmingham Central Technical Colleges, to study practical mathematics, applied mechanics and thermodynamics, and started a career as a design draughtsman, interrupted by national service in the RAF where he trained as an Instrument Mechanic. His last year was on secondment to the American Air Force, which was quite an eye-opener, working on B29 Superfortresses.

He progressed from draughtsman to estimator, technical designer and contract engineering manager in the heating, ventilating and air conditioning industry, where he was involved in many major projects in and around the Midlands. Following his retirement Paul became a student again for eight years learning hand-crafted furniture-making, veneering and restoration.

When younger Paul regularly played squash but now confines his interest to clay-pigeon shooting and is currently Vice Chairman of Sutton Gun Club. Jeanne and Paul married in 1957 in Yardley Wood, curiously in the same church as our Vice President, and have two grown-up sons. Unfortunately Jeanne is no longer able to do the walks but is still keen to attend the Pub lunches!

Thursday 7th August, Visit to Buckingham Palace

Report by John Vickers

It must have been a very loud gong to wake thirty-five Probus members and partners for a 7.45am. start, but we were actually on the road to London a minute or two before the scheduled time. The weather forecast was hot and sunny (and accurate for once) and the scenic route to the M42 didn't add much to the journey time.

Buckingham Palace had clearly given careful consideration to the impact of unleashing the entire Probus coachload in one go and had opted for two groups separated by 45 minutes. This meant that while the second group got the chance to watch the Changing of the Guard, the first group were under a bit of pressure to eat their sandwiches before making their entrance. After Brian's discreet explanation to our coach drive of the difference between Saga and Probus, we were given special dispensation to eat on the bus.

An unexpected game of sardines preceded entry to airport-style security, which made us a little nervous of having to deal with a similar crush of sightseers in the Palace itself, but these fears were unfounded as there was plenty of space to stroll through the state rooms at one's own pace, with an audio guide that actually worked ... and efficiently. The interior is magnificent, the exhibition well organised, and the Palace guides, almost all of them young people, were delightfully helpful. The tour took just over a couple of hours, leaving us plenty of time for a tea break before the garden tour. Not everyone managed to resist the cakes on display, however.

Our garden guide was very pleasant, though admitting early on to not being a gardener himself, and the Palace can't have alerted him to the forensic nature of Probus questioning, so we are still uncertain as to whether the fruit of the Indian chestnut tree is edible, or if the trees themselves were imported, but we did come away with a lot of interesting information and some insight into how the Royal Family made use of this tranquil space in the heart of London.

The coach picked us up promptly, and despite the time of leaving - 4.30pm.—we made relatively good progress through the rush hour traffic. On the way back our President read out a letter of welcome he had received, signed by Charles on behalf of his mother and father. When he got to the analysis of compostable material from the household cavalry, however, I began to fear that John might have been sold a fake parchment.

We arrived back at Foley Road at 8.15pm. after a thoroughly enjoyable and extremely interesting day out. Our thanks to Brian Mallett for his inevitably excellent organisation of the outing, and to him and David for their capable leadership of the two groups for the day. - jv



'OK, Probus types, who did it? That tree was perfectly all right before you came past, and all breakages have to be paid for!' - (message received from Forest Ranger, Middleton Woods).

Picture taken by Fred Ditchfield during Pub Amble to the Green Man, 17th July.



Monday 28th July, Bowls at the Rag
Report by Mike Taylor, photo by Tony Ferney-
hough

*Left; Restaurant at 'The Rag' won a Certificate of Excellence in 2014.
Below; The winners, with their prizes.*



The Rag Inn, this year's venue for our Bowls Tournament, was once a miners' pub, and then a restaurant was added, and now it's a hotel. However the most interesting part of the site is the bowling green. To say it was a challenge was to understate the difficulty; it was very fast, unpredictable, and with sloping edges a significant number of bowls ended up in the gutters.

Quote of the day went to Mike Haynes, "I am definitely improving, as more of my bowls are ending up in the gutters, which means I must be getting closer to the Jack".

As usual Mike Lock performed abstruse mathematical calculations to produce the plan for playing partners, and even though there were the usual complaints, it proved to be a fair and random choice.

The day was divided into two sessions, with everyone playing two games before and after lunch. With the hot weather we were grateful for the umbrellas, and for the bar being open all day. Lunch was excellent, with plenty of good food, and we were also provided with morning coffee and afternoon tea for the prize-giving.

This year's winners were:

Overall winner, and winner of Men's Cup: President John Fellows, Score 243

2nd overall winner and Men's runner-up: Vice President Fred Ditchfield, Score 221

Ladies Cup winner: Janet Gospel, Score 219.

Ladies runner-up Yvonne Lock, Score 218.

Congratulations to the winners, and well done to all competitors for persevering on this long and hot day, and special thanks to Mike Lock for his superb organisation. - mt



Erica, wearing her Afghanistan Civilian Medal

July Speaker:
'My Visit to Afghanistan' by Erica Perkins
Report by Rod Crowley

With the centenary anniversary of the First World War imminent, how appropriate it was for July's talk to remind us of the horrors of war, whilst also inspiring us by highlighting the dedication and professionalism of our service personnel in today's conflicts.

Erica Perkins is the Critical Care Manager at the QE hospital, after 35 years as an intensive care nurse. She told us that much to the annoyance of the London hospitals the QE was chosen as the Royal Centre of Defence Medicine, thanks to its coverage of all specialities, links to the University and 20-minute transfer time from the airport. In 2009, at the height of the action in Afghanistan she was seconded for four months to the intensive care unit at Camp Bastion,

She realised what she had let herself in for on the flight from Kandahar, as she became aware of the safety precautions – all flights during darkness, all on board wearing helmets and body armour, and armed guards sitting by all doors and windows. Having bedded down for the remainder of the first night in bunks in an aircraft hangar, cheek-by-jowl with all the young troops, the eight-man pod which was to be "home" for her stay must have seemed luxurious, with its air conditioning, hot showers and internet access for lap-tops!

However, with the all-pervasive dust, and temperatures up to 50°C, it was not quite like a four-star hotel! All mobile phones were banned, in case they fell into Taliban hands and were used to send fake messages to terrorise families at home.

Similarly, the intensive care unit was well-equipped but more basic than she was used to, with no piped oxygen or piped suction. During her time there, the injuries treated were: 72 amputations (1, 2 and 3 limbs); 6 abdominal, 6 severe head injuries (all proving fatal) and 16 burns. The absence of chest injuries and other head injuries is a testament to the quality of the troops' body armour and helmets. The aim of the unit was to stabilise casualties, to allow early repatriation for definitive care at the QE. This was usually achieved within 48 hours.

At the end of her time at Camp Bastion Erica became only the second recipient of the Afghanistan Civilian Medal. One other "perk" was to meet Prince William. Both William and Harry made numerous, informal visits, which were real boosts to morale.

During questions, she advised us to make sure we had our traffic accidents locally because the expertise now amassed at the QE makes it the best in the country! This is just a flavour of a fascinating and humbling talk, rounded off by a vote of thanks from Mike Taylor and appreciative applause

Rod Crowley

Diary of events and activities to December 2014

Thursday 28th August

Club meeting:

'A funny thing happened at the Registry Office'

Speaker; Mr John Yates

Newsletter Report: Alf Dineen

Vote of Thanks: Brian Harbourn

Kitchen Rota:

**Mike Haynes, David Rooke,
Bob Badham, Dennis Perkins,
Keith Keeley**

Monday 1st September

Visit to JCB Excavators

John Fellows, co-ordinator

Thursday 11th September

Long Walk led by Don Cooper

**Friday 5th– Monday 8th September
Weekend at Lakeside Holiday Village,
(Warners) at Hayling Island**

Organised by Jim Bailey & Mike Gospel

Thursday 18th September

Pub Amble led by Roy Willson

Thursday 25th September

Club Meeting

'Hadrian & the Pork Scratchings'

Speaker; Mr Bob Bibby

Newsletter Report; Tim Daly

Vote of Thanks: Graham Jones

**Kitchen Rota: Mike Lock,
Mike Terry, Philip Troman,
Terry Booth, Peter Terleski.**

Tuesday 30th September

Ladies Bowls Day

Geoff Silvester, co-ordinator

Thursday 2nd October

Long Walk led by Graham Jones

Thursday 9th October

Pub Amble (to be advised)

Thursday 16th October

Visit to the Garrick Theatre,

'Half a Sixpence' with Sutton

Coldfield Musical Theatre Company

Thursday 23rd October

Club meeting:

'How to be an Advanced Driver'

Speaker; Mr Neil Atkins

Newsletter Report: Richard Humphrey

Vote of Thanks: Bryan Nicholas

Kitchen Rota:

**Jim Bailey, Tim Daly, Alf Dineen,
Mike Gospel, Barry Parsonage**

Thursday 30th October

Dining at The Boathouse Restaurant

Organised by Harry Medcalf

Thursday 6th November

Long Walk led by David Rooke

**Friday 14– Sunday 16th November
Thursford Weekend**

Organised by Jim Bailey

Thursday 20th November

Pub Amble (to be advised)

Thursday 27th November

Club Meeting

'A Scientist turns to Crime'

Speaker: Mr Rodger Ide

Newsletter Report: Mike Gospel

Vote of Thanks: David Roy

Kitchen Rota:

**Paul Beaumont, Dale Lyons,
Brian Mallett, Peter Prime,
Peter Weston**

Friday 5th December

Christmas Lunch at Moor Hall

Organised by Harry Medcalf

Monday 8th December

Long Walk led by Rod Crowley

Monday 1st September, Visit to JCB Excavators, Uttoxeter

Make your own way there and meet at 10.00am; be warned, it's some distance beyond Ux'oter but at least you won't be confused by the presence of the 'other' Bamfords, the original family business that JCB swallowed-up a good few years ago now, to Joe's great satisfaction I'm sure. Two course lunch, tea or coffee, price £25.00pp, and for that we *might* get to see the fabulous 'dancing diggers' (no, not Australians!). The board will be out at the next meeting.

- John Fellows

Thursday 11th September, 'The Quarryman's Walk'

Meet at the Malt Shovel pub, Grange Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, CV10 0SS, at 10.00am. There is a small car park but also parking in road. This is a mixed walk about six miles in length, with no stiles and a couple of gentle gradients.

Directions: Join A5 at Mile Oak heading east towards Atherstone. After about nine miles take a right turn signposted 'Hartshill' and follow signs to Hartshill. About 200 yards after a single-file hump-back bridge turn left at the small village green, and just past the Stag and Pheasant turn left again into Grange Road. The Malt Shovel is about 100 yards down on the left. Note that Sat Navs will take you a slightly different way. Distance from Mere Green 18 miles. This establishment serves real ale and the restaurant is highly rated for the quality of food and cooking. A room has been reserved for lunch, so please book at next meeting and let me know if you should have to cancel. My 'phone number on the day is 07423065282.

- Don Cooper

Thursday 18th September, Pub Amble at Hopwas

Meet at 'The Tame Otter', Hopwas, B78 3AF, at 10.00am for 10.30 start. The walk is about three miles on canal towpaths, farm tracks, through woods and on pavement. No stiles but two sloping sections, one up and one down. Lunch booked for 12.30pm.

Directions; The pub is easy to find, on the A51 Tamworth-Lichfield road about three miles west of Tamworth. From Sutton go via A453 towards Tamworth, fork left onto B5405. Distance is about seven miles, time to venue about twenty minutes.

- Roy Willson.

Tuesday 30th September, Ladies Bowls Day

This will be the last day of outdoor bowling for the year, and all ladies are invited to take part in our usual informal competition at the Sutton Coldfield Conservative Club. Cost is £8.00 per head, including buffet, commencing at 10.00 for 10.30am. After this session we move to the indoor bowling at Tamworth.

- Geoff Silvester

Advance notice: - Next year's Summer Break will be at Giardini-Naxos on the North-East coast of Sicily, staying at the Hotel Caesar's Palace. Cost is £749 p.p. in twin room. Dates are 7-14th June. Contact Bob Badham to check whether places are available.

September Speaker: 'Hadrian and the Pork Scratchings'

Presented by Mr Bob Bibby

I telephoned in the usual way to get advance details of the September presentation, only to discover that our speaker had quite suddenly passed away. Dennis is making arrangements for an alternative, hopefully to be announced at the August meeting.

- pw