



**On the Cubbington Trail (Leamington Spa)
Long Walk, Thursday 5th February, led by Bob Badham**

Twelve intrepid walkers set out on an overcast morning, not to be put off by the weather forecast which proved to be incorrect as for once it remained dry. The start point was the Kings Head Pub in Cubbington, then through the village centre to the nearby fields where we joined the Millennium Way.

The walk took us through a number of fields and into the Newbold Comyn Park and across the golf course. A number of golfers were out on the course but there again, it takes all sorts. We crossed the River Leam a couple of times following well-worn paths which in places were muddy and slippery as a consequence. All completed the seven-mile circular walk in good spirits, enjoying the mixed company until we eventually returned to the Kings Head where the spirits were topped up further. An excellent buffet lunch was laid on by the licensee that was enjoyed by all.

- Bob Badham

More than you really want to know about Henry VIII?

Are you watching 'Wolf Hall'? Still? Admittedly it's a bit slow and gloomy but Eileen and I have the great advantage of having read the books so that most of the time we can work out which character is which, even though they all wear black and are called 'Thomas'. Even so, we're enjoying it, and if you're similarly interested in the Tudor period I'd like to draw your attention to the six big 'Shardlake' novels by C.J. Sansom.

They overlap 'Wolf Hall' to a degree, in that 'Dissolution', the first book, is set in 1537 when Cromwell is still in the ascendant, and the series runs to 1547 (so far) when Henry is about to fall off his perch. But in tone they're very different to Hilary Mantel's dramatized history because the central character, lawyer Matthew Shardlake, is entirely imaginary, and these are unashamedly 'detective' mysteries, set in the milieu of the Tudor age and based vividly around some very real events.

So in the first volume—a hefty 500+ pages—Cromwell sends Shardlake to look into some murky incidents surrounding the destruction of a monastery. 'Sovereign' is concerned with the king's 'progress' to York in 1541, and in 'Heartstone' our man is on the Mary Rose. The plotting is taut, the sense of the period is conveyed wonderfully, and his portrayal of the late-period Henry is absolutely chilling. C.J. Sansom took a PhD in History at Birmingham University and knows his stuff; these books will keep you occupied for a good few weeks.

- pw



"Nomads of the South," Tony Ferneyhough called us, exiled to Bournemouth with no home to call our own, not until early March anyway. It's not all bad, though, since I sat out on the balcony and sun-bathed for two hours last Sunday, and the *moules frites* at The Hermitage are great value at £8.95. Still, it's made it a bit tricky to produce a Newsletter by remote control, and I'm grateful to Tony for handling production this month. Hopefully I'll be up for the February meeting.

MAKING YOUR APOLOGIES: If you can't attend a General Meeting advise **Mike Terry**, If you can't do the Kitchen Rota, advise **Graham Jones**; can't provide Newsletter Report or Vote of Thanks contact me, **Peter Weston**, before the meeting concerned (pr.weston@btinternet.com).



Sutton Park Probosc Club

(Founded 1998)

President: John Fellows

Newsletter

No. 194

February 2015



**January Speaker:
'Six Thousand Years of
Clay'
by John Christophers
Report by Peter Weston**

*Left: Nice selection but
David wasn't buying!*

I was looking forward to this talk because it's an interesting subject, and indeed our speaker was off to a promising start with his conjectures about the birth of pottery in Mesopotamia ('land of the two rivers') somewhere over 6000 years ago.

"What is clay?" he asked rhetorically, before telling us that it's basically rock dust, eroded out of the landscape and blown or washed down as fine particles, ultimately to end up in the bottoms of lakes and rivers. Since the whole of the Iraq floodplain is more-or-less made out of clay, it's not surprising that somewhere along the line people noticed that after you built a campfire on the stuff, it went hard.

From there he suggested, some early genius had the idea of using clay to line the reed baskets they were making to see how they turned out when baked in the fire. The remains of some of these 'basket pots' have actually been found, always in pieces because they were quite fragile, and they represented a technological breakthrough because for the first time people could carry and store water, and learn to cook in their new pots.

John made the interesting point that the shape of that very first basket determined the whole future of ceramics. If it had been flat-bottomed then the clay lining would have cracked and been useless; fortunately it must have had a rounded bottom, which allowed the formation of a good, water-tight pot and thus led to the world as we know it. *Cont/d....*

This was all good, interesting detail and I didn't mind John's digression into the many uses we have for clay; for roof, floor and wall tiles, pipes, bathroom fittings, teapots and chinaware, chimney pots and—most important of all—house-bricks.

Unfortunately, that diversion proved fatal. Distracted, our man rushed out to his car and brought in yet another pot, a big terra-cotta cooking pot from the Punjab which he then waved round a bit for no apparent reason. Trying to give him a helpful nudge I asked if this represented the next stage of pottery evolution, but the answer was, “no, this came along some 2000 years later.”

Somebody else asked about the invention of the pottery wheel, and for a moment we were back on track as the speaker explained about ‘coil pots’, in which you wind a long strip of clay around a tree-trunk, and how this must have led to another spark of genius when someone realised you could sit still and turn the pot on a balanced stone, rather than walking round and round the stationary object.

Unfortunately this led to more confusion when one of our members asked the very sensible question, “how do you get the pot off the tree-trunk?”, and if there was a coherent answer I missed it because by now things were really falling apart as our speaker suddenly asked; “Where does an itch go when you scratch it?” (yes, he really did).

And that was about it. I'd have liked to hear something about glazing, Greek and Roman pots, porcelain, Delft and Royal Doulton. As it was we skipped five thousand years to Stoke-on-Trent, which we learned once had over 4000 bottle-kilns (all gone because of the Clean Air Act). And our man said that it takes seven years to learn how to throw a pot on a wheel, a figure I doubt because I've done it, albeit badly, after just five minutes practice.

It was a talk which began well but descended into muddle. “Very disappointing,” said Selby, and I had to agree. Mike Lock gave a short and gracious Vote of Thanks and the speaker gathered up his pots and went home. I don't think he sold any. **- Peter Weston**



What was the significance of the Punjabi cooking pot? I think we should be told.



INTRODUCING OUR NEW MEMBER, DAVID TIPPIN

David was born in Birmingham during his mother's Christmas visit to her parents, but was soon taken to the Cambridgeshire home near the airforce base where his father served. Two years later his father was killed in action and so he returned to his grandparents' home - and a Victorian style upbringing. He later rejected many of those early 'values', notably the superstitions, but retains some to this day!

Educated at KE Five Ways School and Aston University he became a Chartered Engineer and embarked on a career that would take him to many foreign parts including longish spells in China, India, and USA. At age 55 after an aggressive company takeover he started his own business in disabled access equipment.

David married Anita in 1967 – the result of a blind date in 1964 – and they have two sons and four grandchildren. He is a long-standing member of Rotary and a practising Christian *[the two are not mutually exclusive - pw]*.



after braving the elements the soaked few received a warm welcome from the massed ranks of the many at the Parson and Clerk, not to mention a virtual cornucopia of delicious roasts, assorted vegetables and mountainous Yorkshire Pudding from the carvery, all for an amazing £5.99.”

“The gloomy weather forecast lead to a sudden urge to prioritise glass-washing,” noted **Dale Lyons**, “resulting in only a few stalwart walkers braving the elements for two-and-a-half miles across a windswept Sutton Park with our intrepid President John and Brian Spencer leading the way. Janet and I were there—after 26 miles on crutches you don't think a little rain would put me off, do you!

“In the event when it came the threatened downpour only lasted for the last fifteen minutes of the walk (but come back Roy, all is forgiven!). “So,

Members are reminded that if you want to join the Amblers for a pub lunch you cannot just ‘turn up’ on the day but must book in advance.



Back to **Tony** (the Birdman): “I noticed many birds on the pool, mainly the regular tufted ducks, swans, coots and Canada geese, but also some gulls driven inland by the bad weather on the coast. The walk was mainly on roads but with a short section through some low-level bracken before we arrived at Royal Gate, only a step from the Parson and Clerk. “It was an excellent lunch and forty-four diners attended, though we had only booked for 36. Some had clearly turned up unannounced without advising the organiser. Fortunately, on this occasion the staff were able to provide us with an additional table but this can never be guaranteed as some of the venues we pre-book have very limited space.

All members are welcome to join us on these pub Ambles but you **must book in advance** or risk being turned away.” **Above photo by Geoff, Below, from Tony.**

“Jackie and I were very pleased with the way the morning went, and we appreciated the help given by a willing team of washer-uppers, some of whom would clearly do anything rather than walk! All performed magnificently in ensuring that glasses were speedily washed and returned to their boxes. We are also grateful for the potted plants we received later in the afternoon, which was very kind of the club.”



“MORE FIZZ, ANYONE?”

The 17th ‘Bucks Fizz’ walk, Thursday 19th February
Reports by our Special Correspondents

“By 8.30 on the morning we were starting to become a little worried that nobody had yet turned up,” said **Allan Powers**. “Although we haven’t been involved with Probus for very long we know how members like to arrive early for social events!”

“The gathering at their very pleasant and well-appointed Edwardian abode went very well,” wrote **Tony Ferneyhough**, “but unfortunately I missed quite a bit of the morning session because I had to go back for my camera!”
[I should hope so, too – ed]

“We had been looking forward to hosting the Bucks Fizz Walk,” continued **Allan**, “since this was our first opportunity to take an active part in helping with a social event.

“The Bucks Fizz Walk has been a regular feature on the Probus calendar almost since the club’s inception and Brian Spencer has always master-minded the event. Brian came to visit us a few days before to give advice on the usual format, but the day before he felt unwell and Geoff and Sheila Silvester kindly stepped in to help. Fortunately Brian felt a little better on the morning and was able to take over.”



Here’s **Tony** again: “Geoff took most of the pictures (with Brian’s camera) and I only took two, one of our hosts for the morning and one of the walkers. There weren’t too many of the latter – just nine started out from the car park at Wyndley Pool and two cut short their walk (no names but they had a family dog with them).”

Left: Fifty Shades of Pink,



Above;
Brian dispenses Fizz & justice!
Left; “Let me tell you a story”
[Photos; Allan]



THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS!

- A medley of pictures which didn’t make it into the Newsletter the first time round



Left; “Push harder, Janet!”
(Conga-line at Summer Barbecue)

Below: Brian and David having lots of fun!

Right; Don has now left the club though we hope we will still see him and Norma from time to time.

Below; A memory of Ron & Rhona at the Summer Barbecue.



Right: Dennis & Maureen at the President’s Supper. Dennis has had a difficult time during the past few months but we hope he’ll be back with us soon.



Above; “Don’t call me ‘Arkwright’,” John tells Val, outside the ironmonger’s shop at the Black Country Museum.

Diary of events and activities to June 2015

Thursday 26th February Club General Meeting

'An Inspector Calls'

Speaker: Mr David Howe

Newsletter report: Terry Booth

Vote of Thanks: Roger Phillips

Kitchen Rota: Brian Senior,
Brian Harbourne, Brian Spencer
Fred Nightingale, John Buckland

Friday 27th February Skittles Evening at

Lea Marston Leisure Centre
Organised by Jim Bailey & Mike Gospel

Thursday 5th March Long Walk led by David Rooke

Saturday 7th March
Spring Dining Event
at Walmley Golf Club
Organised by Harry Medcalf

Thursday 12th March
Visit to B'ham Assay Office
Organised by Bob Badham

Thursday 19th March
Pub Amble around Sandwell
Country Park, led by Brian Spencer

Saturday 21st March
'Voices and Brass' concert,
Sutton Coldfield Town Hall
Organised by John Cheale

Thursday 26th March Club General Meeting

'The Role of the Lord Lieutenant'

Speaker: Paul Sabapathy,

Lord Lieutenant of the West Midlands

Newsletter Report: Rod Crowley

Vote of Thanks: Barry Parsonage

Kitchen Rota: Selby Betts; Neil Crabb;
Bob Badham; Mike Haynes;
Keith Keeley

Friday 10-Saturday 11th April Spring Weekend Break

at the Royal Boar Hotel, Sudbury
Organised by John Cheal

Monday 13th April
Long Walk led by John Carrington

Thursday 16th April
Pub Amble led by Rod Crowley

Thursday 23rd April Club A.G.M

Newsletter Report: Peter Weston

Kitchen Rota: David Rooke,
Roy Willson, Philip Troman,
Terry Booth, Peter Terleski

Thursday 7th May
Long Walk led by Mike Lock

Thursday 14th May
Pub Amble led by John Fellows
& Mike Terry

Thursday 28th May Club General Meeting

The Staffordshire Regiment;
The Battle of the Somme, 1916

Speaker: Mr David Shergold
Newsletter Report: Brian Harbourne
Vote of Thanks: Peter Terleski

Kitchen Rota: John Cheal,
Mike Lock, Alf Wallwork,
Ian Scholes, Roy Galloway

Thursday 4th June
Long Walk led by Geoff Silvester

Thursday 4th June
'Buddy' at the Garrick Theatre
Organised by Brian Mallett

Sunday 7th-14th June
Summer Break in Sicily
Organised by Bob Badham

Friday 27th February, Skittles Evening at Lea Marston Leisure Centre

Booking have been made by now, starting time is 6.00pm., prompt, in view of the number of players. Usual basket supper will be provided.

- Jim Bailey

Thursday 5th March, Long Walk at Malvern, led by David Rooke

A slightly more challenging walk than usual, of seven miles on and around the Malvern Hills. Meet at 10.00am. for 10.30 start at British Camp car park (£3 fee), junction of A449 and A4232 opposite Malvern Hills Hotel, where we will take lunch. Full details and directions have been circulated. Any queries please contact me.

- David Rooke

Thursday 19th March, Pub Amble around Sandwell Country Park

Led by Brian Spencer. Details will be announced at the February meeting.

Saturday 21st March, 'Voices and Brass' at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

A charity concert featuring the Birmingham Schools Brass Band along with something mysteriously called 'the Grand Central Chorus'. Tickets £10, board will be out at the next meeting, programme starts at 7.30pm.

- John Cheale

Friday 10-11th April Spring Weekend Break at the Royal Boar, Sudbury

Members have already been advised of this short overnight break, and I am considering various ideas for Saturday activities, possibly including a walk in Dovedale. Cost is £195.00 per couple, to include bed, breakfast and evening meal. While the hotel has now been advised of our numbers, places may still be available.

- John Cheale

Monday 13th April, Urban Heritage Trail, Long Walk led by John Carrington

To complement the visit to the Assay Office and our previous urban walk I have devised a heritage walk through the leafy glades and industrial hinterland of Hockley, Winson Green, Handsworth and Smethwick. We will start at 10.15am. from the rear entrance of Symphony Hall alongside the Canal and return to the same spot. The walk is approximately 6 – 6 ½ miles, no stiles, no mud and only very gentle inclines. There is plenty to marvel at and the majority of the walk is totally flat and encompasses a couple of canal towpaths. I suspect most walkers will arrive by train hence the 10.15am start. I have not yet booked a meal but anticipate that by the time of the walk the 'Fiddle and Bone' will be fully refurbished and open. Once I know numbers I can circulate further details. Board out at next meeting.

- John Carrington

Thursday 16th April, Pub Amble around Hopwas

Led by Rod & Hilary Crowley with lunch at 'The Tame Otter', details to be advised.

Thursday 4th June, Visit to see 'Buddy' at the Garrick Theatre

Put this date in your diaries if you want to see this superb musical on the life of the great Buddy Holly. Details and tickets will be available at a later date.

- Brian Mallett

MARCH MEETING—'The Role of the Lord Lieutenant'

Paul Chandrasekharan Sabapathy CBE was appointed Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the West Midlands in October 2007. Born in Chennai in India, Paul moved to the UK in 1964, and completed a Masters Degree from Aston University. After a 28-year career in industry he retired as Assistant M.D. of IMI Titanium in 1996 and was Chief Executive of North Birmingham Community NHS Trust until 2000. A former Chairman of Birmingham City University, he was awarded the OBE for services to Urban Regeneration in 1995 and a CBE in 2004 for services to business and education in the West Midlands.