

Report on Long Walk on Cannock Chase, Monday 3rd February

With Bob Badham's planned visit to Kenilworth Castle cancelled yet again because of the rain and heavy conditions underfoot, Rod came up with an 'emergency' alternative on Cannock Chase. Perhaps because of its close location the Chase is often overlooked as a base for our trips but with sandy and well-drained ground it makes an ideal location for winter walking.

And so it proved - on a blustery but dry day, nine hardy souls, many of them not having walked since before the Christmas break, enjoyed a pleasant amble over the mounds and paths which make up the Chase terrain. Afterwards we all adjourned to the 'Swan with Two Necks' at Longdon. Now re-opened and re-furbished, it provided us with a very good lunch. Congratulations to John Vickers for usurping David Rooke as the 'Fish and Chip King' by consuming the largest piece of haddock ever seen on a Probus plate! Thanks also to Rod for planning both walk and lunch, which was much enjoyed by all.
- Barry Gill

And here's your Editor again..... 'Learning New Tricks!'

Eileen bought me an iPad for Christmas, which came as a bit of a surprise since I was expecting a cravat! And I must admit to being a little dismayed at the time because ahead of me I could see the prospect of having to learn an entirely new bunch of tricks and like any old dog, this was not something I particularly wanted to do.

You know what I mean. Whether you buy a vacuum cleaner, TV set or a new car, it comes with a great long list of instructions (it took me ages to find out how to re-set the clock in my S-Type). Unlike Fred Ditchfield, for instance, I'm not a great fan of the latest gadgets but prefer to coast along quietly in the slipstream, five years behind the white-hot cutting-edge of new technology (by which time it might be working properly).

As for computers, I went through the torments of the damned last Autumn when my trusty old system expired and I had to get to grips with Word 2013, 'Outlook', and all the other exciting new programmes from Microsoft which made everything a great deal more complicated than it was before. So I regarded the iPad with great suspicion—what would I use the stupid thing for?

Well, two months later I've changed my mind. It's been very useful during my daily train journeys to the Q.E., for instance, because it connects to the mobile phone network so I can read the *Times*, check my e-mails, and play Scrabble with a man in Australia. Today I even watched a 'Horizon' programme, wearing earphones just like all the other kids in the carriage!

It takes excellent photographs which you can easily share via e-mail in seconds, I can talk to my grandchildren in Milton Keynes in full colour, and there's a marvellous speaking 'oracle' which answers any question you ask (which might as well be magic for all I understand it!).

So my advice to Probus members is that the iPad is a wonderful toy for adults, though I wouldn't attempt to use it for anything serious like photo-enhancement, word-processing, or doing this *Newsletter*. But to set it up you'll need some help from a techno-savvy son-in-law, or at the very least from an eight-year-old child!
- Peter Weston

A very quick note to say that I'll welcome your comments on the Newsletter, positive or negative!

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: Rod Crowley

Newsletter

No.183

February 2014



January Speaker: 'How I became a Vicar' by The Rev. Ben Whitmore

Report by Mike Lock
Photos by Dennis Rose

The Reverend Ben Whitmore introduced his talk by re-living the time, when as an eleven-year-old at a boarding school, he was persuaded to attend a talk at the school's Christian Union during a break in the middle of doing his 2½ hours of prep one evening. He was so inspired by what he heard that he was immediately converted from being a typical teenaged atheist to becoming a committed Christian.

This memory set the scene for a most informative and fascinating description of Ben's journey through life to his present position as Vicar of Penn parish in Wolverhampton. He was chosen from a group of twenty candidates for ordination, and later Bishop Mike challenged Ben, then a curate, to use his evangelical gifts at a small church in Rawnsley, near Cannock.

After three years his initial congregation of four (but often just himself) had grown through his strenuous efforts to fill the church. From there he spent seven years at Pleck in Walsall, facing and overcoming many difficulties. In answer to a Member's question Ben replied that one of the best ways to increase the size of a congregation is to ask existing parishioners to identify what they find so attractive about their church and faith; to talk to their friends about it and to invite them to come to the church.
Continued...



In Ben's view it is a waste of time to push leaflets though letter boxes; personal invitations to friends, preferably ten year's younger in age, have proven to be the best method to grow the church.

He considers himself to be a 'round peg in a round hole', and is kept extremely busy at St Bartholomew's church in Penn, which is the second largest within the Lichfield diocese. He works with seven local schools, including two special schools, and with youth clubs and the army cadets including at their summer camps.

Ben clearly loves his vocation and his personality is engaging and inspirational. He started a new Saturday service at 5.30 pm some three years ago, and which now attracts some forty people in a typical week: this is in addition to the usual number of four Sunday services, and numerous weddings, baptisms and funerals. He married his wife Jo some sixteen years ago and has two daughters.

Members marvelled at Ben's energy and enjoyed his many stories. If only all vicars were so inspirational our churches would be full and vibrant.

- Mike Lock

Philip Troman adds:

Our speaker outlined his responsibilities to "Hatch, match and despatch", and in total Ben reckoned on having officiated at around three hundred weddings, a thousand funerals and eight hundred baptisms, and he hadn't dropped a baby yet (although he did have a four-year-old refuse baptism at the last minute)!

"There is a common myth that vicars are six days invisible and one day incomprehensible," he said, "but the truth is very different." His record is ten services in eighteen hours, and each normally requires 4-5 hours of preparation.

He is also a Major in the Army Cadets and takes part in manoeuvres. He remembered one sign at the Otterburn complex which read: '*Unexploded ordnance can kill*', to which someone had added '*Pike – You stupid boy!*'

- Philip Troman

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBER, PETER TERLESKI



By birth Peter is a Mancunian (though his name originated in Poland some 160 years ago), and he has lived in Little Aston for thirty years. He worked for the Alliance & Leicester Building Society, and then was a Financial Consultant before retiring. He is very active in Veterans' Sports, being both a hockey player and umpire, which has taken him to Hong Kong for the Asian Cup and in June he will go to the Hague for the Men's Hockey World Cup. For twenty years he has been Treasurer of Sutton Coldfield Hockey Club, one of the largest clubs in the UK, fielding over twenty teams across all ages for both men and women. Peter and wife Margaret are dog owners and enjoy being part of a local walking group.

Thursday 20th February - the 16th 'Bucks Fizz Walk

Brian Spencer began this tradition in 1999, and every year bar one it's been held in a different venue. This time it was at the home of **Mike & Barbara Taylor**, conveniently situated just four doors down from our usual meeting place in Featherstone Road, as Mike explains:

"Bucks Fizz Walk? What's that?"

"Oh, we only need to borrow your house for a while," said Brian, "have a quick drink, then go for a short amble in the park and finish at a pub for lunch."

"No problem," I thought. And so it proved, as Barbara and I welcomed nearly forty people and several crates of the fizzy stuff. Even the washing-up was done for us, and as a special note John Fellows was presented with a birthday cake, complete with candles, as we all sang 'Happy Birthday'. [mt]

John's membership committee was asked to rejuvenate the club.

Yes please!

John told us a wonderful story about when he and Joan arrived at the hospital to bring Selby home after his recent hip operation. They were a bit early and were asked to wait, but the only area available was in the Fertility Clinic Waiting Room. Apparently they attracted much amused attention and the muttered comment, "Optimists!" [pw]



That's Mission Impossible!



"The weather proved to be in our favour with some welcome sunshine," **Sylvia Bailey** continues, "remaining dry as per instructions from the ever-reliable Roy and Mary Willson.

We took a path past the golf course to the Jamboree Stone, and then on towards the pub, and once again Jim and I were able to gain a captive audience for our South African adventures....but today's news is tomorrow's fish & chip wrapping, as they say...

"One of our members was so enchanted with their own dialogue that it took a little while before they realised they were chatting away to a complete stranger (and his dog) who had somehow become mixed up with our group.

"Just past the Stone we met a couple coming the other way. Their blue and purple anoraks looked familiar, and we found it was Geoff & Sheila Silvester, who had parked at the finish and back-tracked for the last lap. A shrewd move—but alas, no Bucks Fizz for them!" [sb]

Lunch was at the Miller & Carter at Boldmere (or as some of us still call it, 'La Reserve') and it was a shame things were slightly chaotic since the restaurant appeared to be taken by surprise at our numbers. "We've only one chef and he has only one grill," wailed the young waiter. Some tables had a very long wait for their meals, and the manager was apologetic. However, I've been there in the evening and service has been much faster, and I've always found the food to be hot, tasty and reasonably priced, so do give it another chance! [pw]

'The Membership Page'— As President Rod has said, the success of SPPC is due to the quality of its people, so I can think of no better way of recognising their talents than by inviting members to write about their interests, activities or professions, beginning with our newest member. - pw



'THE REAL MARATHON MEN'

The story of the London Marathon 'Ever-Presents'

By Dale Lyons

Left; Dale leads the pack at the 2000 London Marathon—for 400 yards, that is!

In 1995 a group of 42 runners in the London Marathon were given the title **'The Ever-Presents'** by Chris Brasher, the creator of the event, in recognition of having completed all fifteen marathons from the very first one in 1981. Now, thirty-three years from the start and with degenerating joints, the ravages of time, injury, illness and death, only fifteen remain in action, and among this group is your very own Dale Lyons, *aka* The Galloping Gourmet.

I've now written a book in which I attempt to tell the inside story of this group of marathon hard-men who have been single-minded enough to battle around the course over so many years. Perhaps it will inspire some of those who watch the London Marathon on TV each year to think 'that could be me!'.

Why have I written it? Well, the idea first came to me just before the start of the 1981 New York Marathon, my sixth. Anyone who has been there will have the Staten Island start-line and the towering pillars of the Verazanno Narrows Bridge seared into their memory for all time. And it was here that I noticed a gigantic 10-foot pole being held aloft by a rather slight, older runner. On closer examination the pole was decorated by a series of numbers. "What's that all about?" I enquired of a fellow-runner. "Oh he's a famous athlete who has run every New York marathon," I was told.

So in London in 2012 when the 'EPs' were having our annual photo taken at the Green Start point, I remembered that New York scene and thought there really should be a lasting record of our diminishing numbers. But who would do it? After some thought, the only answer I could think of was - me! I knew only too well from previous writing experience what an arduous, time-consuming project it would be, and finally, after a few half-hearted attempts at making notes and talking to some of the other 'EPs' I reached the point of no return. The die was cast!

I've tried to tell the story of a unique group of marathon runners, why they did it and how they gained a London entry every year, of their incredible runs across the world, their amazing records and media coverage and how they raised over £250,000 for charity in the process. Of the remaining thirty-nine past-runners still with us, twenty-seven have contributed to the book and this is their story. - Dale Lyons

[the book is available from Dale at £6.99 - pw]

Visit to the Avery Museum, Thursday 13th February, Report by Peter Weston

'Some of the details about weighing machines went right over our heads'



I was vaguely disappointed with the Avery visit, mainly I think because we didn't get chance to see the Soho Foundry itself, the 250-year-old building where Matthew Boulton and James Watt built their steam engines and launched Britain's industrial revolution.

To be fair this had never been on the agenda, but I had hoped we might have seen more than a distant glimpse of a tumbledown structure that our host, curator Andrew Lound, said was strictly out of bounds because of the danger of falling masonry. In fact I had the distinct impression that the modern-day Avery company regards the site—now a Grade 2 listed building which they can't rebuild or demolish—as something they have to tolerate but which they're certainly not going to spend any money on maintaining.

This may be unfair, but I had the same feeling about the Museum itself, an amazing collection which on first glance looked more like a medieval torture-chamber, well-stocked with various sinister-looking implements. The place was an indulgence of previous managing directors in the paternalistic old days when Avery was a proud British company, the largest manufacturer of weighing equipment in the world.

Now, it is housed in the slowly decaying and otherwise-abandoned front office and I wonder whether any of the present generation of executives of the American-owned business have ever set foot inside the door?

Having said all that, Andy Lound, splendid in Victorian frock-coat, gave us an exhaustive tour (and I use that word advisedly), perhaps telling us rather more than we really wanted to know about the history of weighing.

So many attended that David Rooke had to split us into two groups, morning and afternoon. Lunch in the Avery canteen was excellent and I could taste the Madras chicken curry for two hours afterwards! - [pw]



Diary of events and activities to June 2014

Thursday 27th February

‘Global Warming—Myth or Fact?’

Mr David Muntzer

Newsletter Report: Ian Scholes

Vote of Thanks: Mike Terry

Kitchen Rota:

John Cheal, Brian Senior

Barry Parsonage, Roger Phillips,

Philip Troman

Friday 28th February

Skittles Evening at Lea Marston

Leisure Centre, 7.00p.m.

Organised by Jim Bailey & Mike Gospel

Thursday 6th March

Long Walk around Carsington Water

led by John Carrington

Saturday 15th March

Bavarian Evening, 7.00pm for 7.30pm

Organised by David Rooke

Thursday 20th March

Short Walk around Bromley Hayes,

led by Roy Willson

Thursday 27th March

The history of English to 1381

Mrs C. Millin

Newsletter Report: Keith Keeley

Vote of Thanks: Mike Lock

Kitchen Rota: Tim Daly,

Mike Gospel, Peter Prime, David Roy,

Alf Dineen

Thursday 3rd April

Long Walk led by Geoff Silvester

Thursday 10th April

Short Walk (to be advised)

Thursday 17th April

Visit to ‘The Mousetrap’

at the Garrick Theatre, Lichfield

Harry Medcalf, co-ordinator

Thursday 24th April

Club AGM

Newsletter Report; Peter Weston

Vote of Thanks: Tim Daly

Kitchen Rota; Barry Gill,

Brian Mallett, Ian Scholes,

Alf Dineen, John Carrington

Thursday 1st May

Long Walk organised by Mike Lock

Thursday 15th May

Short Walk (to be advised)

Saturday 18th May

Concert at Sutton Town Hall

John Cheale, co-ordinator

Thursday 22nd May

‘Baginton Airport’

Mr Barrie Jones

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 Airport

John Carrington, co-ordinator

We are looking for volunteers to organise future ‘Pub Ambles’ - please get in touch with Brian Spencer if you can help.

Thursday 6th March; Long Walk around Carsington Water, led by John Carrington

Originally this walk was planned to start from ‘The Bear’, the famous pub at Berkswell village, just off the A452 on the approach to Kenilworth. However, John advises that a recent recce showed that the ground was very muddy and slippery, so this has been abandoned for the moment in favour of a repeat visit to Carsington Water where there are good cinder paths.

This will be a circular walk of around eight miles, no stiles or gates, and mostly flat. Meet at **10.30 am** at the Visitors Centre, Big Lane, Ashbourne, postcode DE6 1ST. which has a restaurant, café, and ice-cream shop as previous walkers will remember. Journey time about one hour. More details in due course. **- John Carrington**

Thursday 20th March; Pub Amble led by Roy Willson

We start from the Bromley Hayes Garden Centre, about two miles north of Lichfield on the A515. The walk will be about three miles, mostly along canal towpaths and country lanes. There are no stiles or hills although there are some steps up and down from the towpaths. Wear suitable footwear in view of recent weather!

Meet in the garden centre car-park to set off at 10.30, returning for lunch by 12.30. Allow time to visit the plant centre and antiques shop. The board will be out at the February meeting with lunch menus and you need to advise me so these can be booked in advance. **- Roy Willson**

Saturday 15th March; Bavarian Evening

Meet from 7.00pm for 07.30pm start at All Saints' Church Centre, Belwell Lane, for entertainment from Barry Schmidt's Bavarian Band, who will have been appearing earlier in the week at the Cheltenham Festival. There will be a one-hour break for a buffet meal, with free coffee from the bar throughout the evening. Finish will be circa 10.30pm, lederhosen optional. Organiser David Rooke - Mobile 07527705978.

Epson Stylus SX215 A4 printer needs a new home. Little used. 20 Pounds. Please contact Tony Ferneyhough for further information.

March Speaker: ‘The history of English to 1381—Not as boring as it sounds’ by Mrs Carol Millin

Intrigued by the title, I spoke to Mrs Millin, who is a former teacher and instructor at post-graduate level, and asked whether her talk was about *the* English (people), or as the title implied, about the English language. And what was the significance of the year 1381? Well, I guessed the answer to the second question but I'll leave it for Mrs Millin to explain at the March meeting when she tells us about the long series of historical accidents and events that have prompted the evolution of our mother tongue. As my friend Professor Tom Shippey once remarked, if you had asked an educated Roman at the time of Christ to predict what would be the world's universal language in two thousand years' time he might have guessed Latin or Greek or possibly Aramaic, but he could never have imagined it would originate from a minor tribe living in the marshes of lower Jutland, and whose only claim to fame at the time was their nasty habit of drowning their enemies in peat bogs!

- [pw]