

Thursday 10th July, Long Walk in Shropshire

Report by Mike Haynes

The 'Magnificent Seven' rode into the OK Corral (the car park in Shifnal) and the clock was striking ten when the show-down came as Graham and Janet galloped into town, turning the Seven into the 'Magnificent Nine'. After tying-up their steeds they headed out into the heat of the blazing sun, the dust blowing down the parched streets of Tombstone (sorry, I meant Shifnal). It may not sound quite as exciting, but as the 'Shropshire Lad' Graham (apologies to A E Housman) would maintain, Shropshire is indeed God's own country.

I realised this was going to be a premier-class walk when our leader, Dennis, asked whether we would care to walk in the sun or the shade. Strolling through Tudor streets we learned that Shifnal (or Idsall as it was once known), experienced an early industrial revolution all of its own. During the 1570's a charcoal-fired blast-furnace was constructed, and in 1591 the blasted blast-furnace set fire to the town with only Old Idsall House and the parish church of St Andrews surviving the fire.

We went on down lanes, open countryside, on to slow climbs revealing stunning landscapes, along glades, round old mills, and then lunch in a field of poppies and wild daisies, with swifts and a lone raptor showing off their aerobatic skills, again with options from Dennis, "would you like to have it in the sun or the shade, on a bench (so conveniently placed), or on the ground?" And then back across brooks and weirs and finally past St Andrews (12th century) before returning to the corral where our trusty steeds were waiting.

The 'Magnificent Nine' all agreed it was a magnificent day, in magnificent countryside enjoying magnificent weather. Thank you Dennis - magnifico! - **Mike Haynes**

In his report on the Croatia holiday John Carrington made several references to 'Wednesbury International Airport', and, intrigued, I asked him to elucidate. John wrote:-

"It is a little known fact that Wednesbury was on the short-list to become the site of Euro- Disney. The proposal was that it should be built on the Patent Shaft factory site and the spine roads, etc., were part of the overall plans for the site.

"Paris succeeded in their bid and Wednesbury, a bit like Birmingham failing in its bid to host the Olympics, came third after Paris and Spain. On the holiday someone mentioned that they were going to Euro-Disney with their grandchildren and I told them the story of the alternative site at Wednesbury and made a comment about Mickey Mouse, instead of saying 'have a good day' would say 'Alright' or 'Tara a bit'.

"The comment went viral amongst the legates and concubines and despite finding reference on the internet most people did not believe me. Obviously, if it had been built 'Wednesbury International Airport' could have been a spin off!"

I looked on Google and while there are a few mentions I still don't believe it! [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. 188

July 2014



Our 'legates' and 'concubines' pose under the blue skies of Croatia. Photo taken by Geoff.

'I, Probus Malletus'

Early Summer Break to Croatia, 17-24th June

Report by John Carrington, Photographs from Rita Rooke

Having looked at the genealogy, Brian became convinced that he was probably related to Probus Malletus, one of a triumvirate who, in the civil war of 42 BC, took control of the Roman port of Pula in the Istrian region of Croatia. Probus Malletus was a warrior-supporter of Julius Caesar and well-respected in the Roman Empire.

Armed with this newly-discovered information, Brian decided to retrace his ancestor's footsteps and invited other legates to accompany him. Fifteen eventually volunteered, but since the Roman Army, like Probus, was made up entirely of men he agreed that they could be accompanied by their concubines.

So, some 2000 years after the time of the Romans our intrepid, bleary-eyed, but nevertheless enthusiastic band of warriors descended upon Birmingham International Airport. A short flight, with barely time to consume their first ration of pottage, saw the plane land at Pula airport, where members had expected to see a couple of chariots but realised the iron wheels would have made havoc with the French-constructed roads. Brian decided that first they should set up an encampment in the 'gardens of Eden' in Rovinj, a delightful port on the west coast of the Istria peninsula. Though many members subsequently spent a happy afternoon snoozing in the gardens, it was generally felt that the adjoining 4-star hotel was a safer bet!

Cont/d.....

Then, after a little rest and recuperation to get over the jet lag the majority of the legates and their concubines boarded a 50-seater single-decker chariot to visit the fabled conquests of Brian's ancestor, Probus Mallettus. The Arena was stunning (although some members recalled seeing a Simply Red concert with a similar arena as a backdrop). It was easy to imagine Probus Mallettus addressing the masses in the arena, all that would have been missing was the pink umbrella carried by our modern day tour-guide.

Having seen the evidence of Probus ancestry the legates were then allowed free time to enjoy the delights of the Istrian peninsula, sampling typical Croatian food, drink and hospitality, swimming, walking, touring or even negotiating the soft pebbles along the shore of the bay. We heard that on the opposite side some 20,000 naturalists were in residence; needless to say no-one took the boat trip to investigate further!

Before everyone knew it the week was up and it was time for an early breakfast, board the coach and leave for the airport. Despite a detour on a farm track reminiscent of the surface on Clarence Road we arrived well in time for the concubines to relieve the legates of their remaining kuna. Again, a short hop saw the plane land back at Birmingham; it was only a pity the stairs would not fit properly and we nearly spent more time on the tarmac than in the air!

It was a really great holiday and a tremendous vote of thanks to Brian and Margaret for all their hard work in arranging an unforgettable trip.

- John Carrington

Top: Marlene & John enjoy the sunshine; Centre: Happy group. Bottom: Jenny, Dorothy & Pat try their hand at pole-dancing!



Thursday 3rd July, Visit to the Cotswolds, and Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway Organised by John Cheal & Brian Mallett, Report & pictures by Mike Taylor

Barbara and I arrived at 9.15 to find the coach nearly full (you must have to get up really early for a front seat on a Probus day-out!). The weather was lovely, sunny with a little cloud and we enjoyed a good journey, even getting through the road works on the M5 without a hitch.

We stopped in Broadway for 2½ hours, and viewed some interesting properties and a few unusual shops for the ladies. Also a couple of fine-art galleries with pictures from £600K; not sure why they let me in! Everyone seemed to enjoy their lunches at various cafes and restaurants, including the very posh Lygon Arms. We then departed to Toddington for our steam-train ride. For those who may be interested, the engine was a class 2-8-0 Heavy Freight,



'I always wanted to be an engine-driver!'



Number 2807, Great Western. This particular train had taken 29 years to re-build and is the oldest running one in its class. We had a reserved carriage and drinks service, and our own guide, Norman, who was most helpful. Our return trip to Cheltenham Racecourse was over too quickly, though some of us managed to squeeze in time for an ice-cream, and then we were very soon back on the coach on our way home, during which journey Barry Parsonage 'entertained' with a few jokes for those of us still awake.

President John thanked John Cheal and Brian Mallett for organising a most relaxing and enjoyable trip and Armani our driver for his smooth and safe driving.

- Mike Taylor

From the Ashes.....

Through the efforts of John Vickers a select few from Probus visited St Barnabas Church on 17th May to hear the Sutton Coldfield Orchestra play a night of Russian music. For me it was a trip down memory lane, because I had really wanted to re-visit the church where I had spent many hours practicing and singing as a choirboy back in the early 1950s, and later as a bell-ringer.

The church had been gutted by arsonists in 2007 and the damage was so severe its future hung precariously in the balance until funds were finally arranged for its restoration. It was eventually re-consecrated in 2012 by the Bishop of Birmingham. The transformation is just like magic!

Gone are the original pews where, as lads, we fidgeted and tried to look angelic in our white ruff and surplices and red cassocks (can you imagine!). They were very formative years for me. Now the church boasts a wonderful all-glass entrance which serves as a meeting place-cum-cafe. The main body of the church lost all but one of the stained glass windows, and the remainder have been replaced by modern leaded glass. The original wind-powered organ, where Mr Smith (choirmaster) used to sit - all gone! This area is now a small chapel. The main stained glass window above the altar (depicting the last supper) has a wonderfully new - and modern - design. The whole of the restoration has been completed very tastefully and now has a simple and attractive feel which will appeal to a modern congregation.

- Tony Ferneyhough

Parade of the Pengies! Friday 11th July, President's Supper at Swinfen Hall

There we were in our penguin suits on one of the hottest nights of the year, far away from the comforting Arctic conditions of a normal British summer. I overheard one wit suggesting that a good follow-on would be to request Bermuda Shorts to be worn for the Christmas lunch.



Certainly President John understood our plight and in his opening remarks bid the gentlemen remove their jackets, and the ladies to take off their, err... "Shoes!" hissed Marlene.

On our table Janet Wright didn't mess around and flung open the double-doors behind us (a forceful woman, your wife, Dennis), only for an official man to pop up from nowhere and tell us they had to be closed or the air-conditioning wouldn't work. That lasted for five minutes until Tony, making a brief pit-stop for his starter, promptly opened them again, thank goodness!

I spent an interesting few minutes comparing notes on noisy hospital wards with a very cheerful Annette; the main difference seemed to be that she had been kept awake by confused patients falling out of bed, while I was one of those bewildered patients!

Several special guests were present; John and Marlene's daughter Diana and husband Keith, while John Buckland brought his family from Down Under on a last night in the area before leaving for Edinburgh on the morrow.

On Dale Lyon's table were David Tippin (ex-Rotary Club President) and wife Anita (new Chair of District 6 Inner Wheel), and apparently David told a World Cup story. He said that Roy Hodgson had arranged a match with Iceland, and if England can win that he'll organise another with Waitrose!

The meal was really excellent—I had the beef!

Tony Ferneyhough commented that "the second half entertainment was from the 'Eclipse' duo, a lady flautist and a male keyboard player. They played beautifully and a number of the songs were accompanied by the gathered throng - even if they sang quietly to themselves. There were some classical numbers too - such as 'Air on a G String'."

Our President closed the evening with a few very well-presented words. He acknowledged the efforts of Harry Medcalf (not only as MC), with special mention to Geoff Silvester for producing the Menus, Tony Ferneyhough for the Place Names and Table Settings, and Don Cooper for looking after the sound equipment. I'm only sorry that I wasn't able to stay until the end. *[more pictures on club website]* -pw



*Top; John & Marlene were ceremonially clapped-aboard!
Left: Dennis and his two English Roses;
Bottom; Brian and Dorothy enjoy the evening.*



June Speaker; 'Bringing Theatre to Africa' by Ian Appleby

Report by Brian Mallett



Ian Appleby, who is well known in theatre world as a director at Highbury Theatre and Sutton Arts Theatre, gave an enlightening talk on how he directs theatrical shows in South Africa. His raw material is 16-18 year old students at school in a township called Intabazwe, mid-way between Durban and Jo'burg. These students are all black, poverty is part of their life and walking many miles to school is normal. The facilities at the school are minimal and any timber (such as toilet doors) is removed for fires at home in the cold winters.

Some five years ago Ian was persuaded by a close friend to visit the school for two weeks to use his skills to encourage the students to enjoy the pleasure of performing in a show. The school was very helpful in allowing time for rehearsals, although their idea of time-keeping made life very difficult! Despite all the problems, their first show was songs and words from 'The Mikado'. Each year Ian has returned and they have performed excerpts from other shows including 'Guys and Dolls' and 'Grease'.

Ian and his friends now spend four weeks every year bringing enormous pleasure to children who have very little in their lives compared to our children and grandchildren. There is no funding so costs are borne by themselves. The man is an absolute saint!

Brian Mallett

WELCOME TO MIKE HAYNES, OUR LATEST NEW MEMBER



Mike was born in Handsworth so can be considered to be a 'local'. He began his career in electronics for telecom transmission systems, and after various sorties into submarine cable testing and technology training he found his true calling in Optical Fibres (as his wife Kate says, "Mike always preferred light work!"). He spent twenty years in commissioning and installing optical fibre systems for oil and gas industries, both on-shore and for off-shore platforms in the Azeri oil catchment area (Caspian Sea).

Both Mike and Kate (who coincidentally tied the knot in the same parish church as Hilary and Rod Crowley), enjoy our long and short walks, and it's no coincidence that they both share a love of food and wine; must be something to do with all that fresh air. Another co-incidence is that their son Richard, along with his wife Tracy and three daughters, live in Jenny and David Roy's former

home, conveniently around the corner from Nanny and Grandad!

Mike says his only claim to fame is that at school he was in the same form as Ian Laven-der. ("Don't tell them your name, Pike!"). He also has a twin sister, who he says is "much more learned and better looking, too".

Diary of events and activities to October 2014

Thursday 24th July

Club meeting;

'My Visit to Afghanistan'

Speaker: Mrs Erica Perkins

Newsletter Report: Rod Crowley

Vote of Thanks; Mike Taylor

Kitchen Rota:

Selby Betts, John Buckland,

Neil Crabb, Brian Senior,

Brian Spencer

Monday 28th July

Bowls at the Rag

Mike Lock, co-ordinator

Sunday 3rd August

Barbecue at the Fellows

John Buckland, co-ordinator

Thursday 7th August

Visit to Buckingham Palace

Brian Mallett, co-ordinator

Monday 11th August

Worcestershire Walk led by Brian Spencer

Thursday 21st August

Pub Amble led by Bob Badham

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,

Fred Nightingale

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 (to be advised)

Tuesday 23rd September

Ladies Bowls Day

Geoff Silvester, co-ordinator

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,

Terry Booth, Mike Haynes,

Peter Terleski.

Thursday 2nd October

Long Walk led by Graham Jones

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

'Romantica' Italian Restaurant

Organised by Harry Medcalf

Thursday 6th November

Long Walk led by David Rooke

Monday 28th July, Bowls at the Rag

This popular annual all-day event was previously held at The Windmill at Gentleshaw but will now be at the Rag Inn at Rawnsley. We will start with coffee at 10.00am. followed by continuous bowling, except for a lunch break, until about 4.30pm. when we will finish with tea and the presentation of prizes. The Rag has a good reputation for its food: **please book your place for this great day-out with Barry Parsonage at today's Club meeting.** More details, including directions to The Rag will be given at the July meeting. - Mike Lock

Sunday 3rd August, Barbecue at the Fellows

The BBQ commences at noon at John & Marlene's home near Middleton, and after a welcome drink we shall be entertained by a tropical steel band followed by a hog roast. Drinks will be free and we ask members and their wives to come dressed as colourfully as possible. Cost is held at the same level as last year, at £25 per head. You should put your names down at the current meeting if you have not already done so. - John Buckland

Thursday 7th August, Visit to Buckingham Palace

Forty of us will be travelling by coach to visit the State Rooms of Buckingham Palace, which is a self-guided tour followed by a Garden Highlights Tour with an official guide. The visit will last 3¼ hours and we will have time for tea on the terrace. The coach will depart from Foley Road Community Centre at 7.45am. - Brian Mallett

Thursday 11th August, Worcestershire Walk

Meet at: Salwarpe Church Car Park, Salwarpe, Droitwich, Worcestershire (nearest post code WR9 0AH) at 10.15 to start at 10.30am. There are no toilet facilities at this start point. The walk is about 7.5 miles mainly along valley of the River Salwarpe, with a break at The Bowling Green Pub at Hadley after 4.5 miles for a sandwich lunch outside (toilet facilities here of course) with drinks from the pub. After lunch more undulating country with beautiful Worcester-shire views including Malvern and Abberley.

Directions: M5 to Junction 5, then A38 towards Droitwich. At traffic lights after about 1.5 miles go straight on around by-pass. After two islands and a fly-over, about three miles, turn right at the 'Copcut' pub, sign-posted Salwarpe. Go down Copcut Lane, over railway, to the church on the right-hand side after about a mile. Park on road, offside before church. Please let me know if you are going, and arrange lifts to obviate car parking problems. Time to venue is approx. one hour from Streetly. - Brian Spencer

Thursday 21st August, Pub Amble, Whittington

Meet at the 'Dog' Inn at Whittington, near Lichfield, at 10.00am. The walk will be through countryside and alongside a canal. No styles or gates to worry about, and distance is

Advance notice: Bookings for 'Half a Sixpence' must be in with cheques by 30th August as tickets must be purchased early September. Board out at next meeting. - Brian Mallett

August Speaker: 'A funny thing happened at the Registry Office'

Presented by Mr John Yates

John is the official Geneologist at the office* and regularly gives this talk about the 'weird and wonderful' entries he's found among the records, which date back to the founding of the service in 1837. He promises to regale us with tales of the famous - and infamous - people whose lives are so documented, along with a slide presentation of some of the most interesting records.

[No, I didn't know there was one, either. He's the only one in the country. I didn't ask if he'd helped Brian Mallett to trace his ancestor! - pw]*