



Sutton Park Probosc Club

(Founded 1998)

President: Fred Ditchfield

Newsletter

No.198

June 2015

MIDDLETON HALL – A MEDIEVAL TIME WARP RESCUED FROM THE PHILISTINES

Brian Teal a Trustee and Volunteer at Middleton Hall a Grade 2* listed building gave us an impressive Power-point based talk covering the history and conservation of the building. He was accompanied by the Trust's Chairman Nigel Morris.

Mentioned in The Doomsday Book in 1086 has had a chequered history being originally built in 1285 for Philip de Marmion after which it remained with the Willoughby family for over 500 years. During this time Queen Elizabeth 1st knighted the great naturalist Francis Willoughby on her visit in 1575. Whilst at the Hall a fellow naturalist and friend John Ray wrote his seminal work The History of Plants. After Sir Francis' son became 1st Baron Middleton the family seat moved to Wollaton Hall in Nottingham.

Subsequently the Hall had a number of tenants until 1925 when a farmer industrialist demolished much of the Hall in the process of extracting gravel until 1966 when falling into further decay.

Fortunately the Hall had a further turn in its fortunes when In 1980 a Restoration Trust was set up rescue this important Grade 2* listed building to its former glory by volunteers under the tutelage of English Heritage. A major problem was that suitably skilled volunteers were in short supply.

Brian appeared last Sunday on BBC's Country File which featured his work at the Hall where he has acquired the skills of a Master Mason. These skills were demonstrated on a number of slides linked to improvements at the Hall.

It is now open to the public, is a special events venue for weddings etc. and Club Members were cordially invited to visit and given a conducted tour.

Jim Bailey gave the Vote of Thanks Report – Selby Betts Photo – Tony Fernyhough



Fred, Nigel (Trust Chairman) and Brian (presenter)

LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

A DEFECTIVE CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

A young detective constable, working at Steelhouse Lane Police Station, came to work one morning and was allocated a 'further enquiries' task concerning people arrested overnight. One item seized from the suspect was a date stamp from Birmingham General Hospital. This young constable and his mature detective sergeant walked over to the General and quickly established that the date stamp belonged to 'Ward 19' (VD Clinic). They were advised of the location of the clinic and told to 'follow the yellow line'. Different coloured lines on the floor lead to a variety of wards and clinics. The two intrepid detectives eventually arrived at a separate building and upon entering found a waiting room full of men, the majority of whom were reading newspapers held high to cover their faces. In front of them was an office with a closed frosted glass window. The detective sergeant rang the bell and after a short time the window slid open and a nurse asked if she could help. In a loud voice the detective sergeant announced his name and status and said he needed to see someone.

Rather sheepishly the nurse beckoned him forward and whispered "If you come back on Wednesday we have a special clinic for you boys". **John Carrington**

ADDENDUM TO THE MIDDLETON HALL SPEAKER VISIT—BY POPULAR REQUEST!

THE WILLOUGHBY 'GHOST' OF MIDDLETON HALL

Following Brian Teal's most interest talk on Middleton Hall last month, some members suggested I write a piece about the Rolls Royce Ghost I found there.



Walking in the Hall's grounds in the '70s Pat and I were caught in a storm and sheltered in the stable block. I then saw an old truck chassis, with a drive belt running from the back axle to a 6ft diameter circular saw. With the aid of a torch I found underneath some old roofing a mounted Rolls Royce 40/50 engine, gearbox and chassis which I dated as a 1913 Silver Ghost. The gearbox and throttle had regulated the saw's speed while the steering wheel had helped workers getting in and out of the shed.

The following morning I put in an offer to buy the saw mill equipment which was accepted and a volunteer working party helped me remove it. On subsequent visits I retrieved the bonnet, windscreen and four of its five wheels and months later I purchased the headlamps from a former employee who was displaying them as sideboard decoration!

It is testament to the rugged capability of the sophisticated Rolls Royce 7036cc - 6 cylinder engine that when I stripped it down and x-rayed and crack tested the components, they were found to be perfect. What's more the huge crankshaft and other parts were still within works tolerances. I then fitted replacement pistons, rings and bearing throughout. The restoration took me nearly 4 years to complete during which time I had the Barker coachwork replaced, using copies of the original drawings.

The Ghost's photograph was taken outside the Cat & Fiddle atop of a steep hill near Buxton. Most Silver Ghosts of the period were tested up this hill in top gear, prior to being delivered to the coachbuilders. The drivers were perched on a wooden seat clad in sou'westers, leather helmets and goggles!

Coda. Originally the Ghost had been supplied new to Michael Guy Percival Willoughby the 11th Baron Middleton.

Neil Crabb - RR Aficionado



A MEMBERS SUGGESTION— COMPETITION TIME.

Send me a photo from your childhood for the July Newsletter and then see who can link them to the adult member - should be a monumental ask!

There's a prize for the one who gets the most correct.

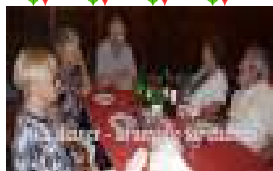
KEEP CALM
it's
COMPETITION TIME!



PROBUS SICILIAN AWAY WEEK—GUARDINI-NAXOS

A PRESIDENTIAL QUOTE ON SICILY

"This week; I've enjoyed a kaleidoscope of good company which has made the holiday for Pat and myself".



SUTTON PARK PROBUS CLUB ON TOUR 2015 7th – 14th June
Caesar Palace Hotel. Guardini-Naxos. Sicily.



On Sunday the 7th June 26 members, wives and partners embarked from Birmingham Airport to Catania in Sicily. Unfortunately illness prevented Brian Spencer and Dorothy Perry from attending. Luckily our hotel, the Caesar Palace was situated at Guardini Naxos in Taormina Bay only an hours coach journey from the airport. The hotel was well up to scratch and despite a few hiccoughs the food came up to standard in both quantity and quality.

From the hotel rooms we were able to view Mount Etna and some of us took the opportunity to visit the volcano which was shrouded in cloud and steam for most of the time. We experienced a heavy sleet and rain storm although the sun was shining in the valley, a very surreal site.

Another trip offered was to visit the film set where the Godfather was filmed as this island is reputedly still run by the Mafia and they apparently still have a very strong presence in business. The trip involved an exciting coach ride around roads that most of us would not attempt to drive for which the coach drivers deserve a medal. At the top of a steep rise we were shown where the film was made and we visited the Bar Vitelli and sat in the chair used by Marlon Brando. (If you speak to our president Fred Ditchfield he will show you a

photo of him sitting in Marlon's chair) This was in the village of Forza D'Agro, we also visited the village of Savoca where the wedding of the Godfather's daughter was filmed.

Another trip was to Syracuse, a town which is a mixture of Greek, Roman, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque buildings including the largest Greek theatre in Sicily. We also visited a cave called Dionysius Ear where every whisper is brought to the surface.

Other trips included a boat trip to Isobella, and an another boat trip around Bella Isle and the Blue Grotto which included snorkelling that I suspect few of our group got involved.

Another memorable highlight was catching the local bus to Taormina where we saw fantastic views of the valley.

On the penultimate evening President Fred hosted a cocktail party on the balcony of his superior room where he

thanked the organisers and said he was honoured to be President of Sutton Park Probud Club.

All things considered it was another excellent holiday enjoyed by all and for which thanks must first go to Bob Badham as well as to Harry Medcalf and Jim Bailey. **Report - John Buckland**



EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES TO SEPTEMBER 2015

Thursday 25th June 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; Peter Gray,
Ivor Welsey, Paul Beaumont,
Peter Prime, Tim Daly**

Thursday 2nd July
Long Walk led by Graham Jones

Thursday 16th July
Pub Amble led by Alfred Wallwork

Friday 17th July
President's Supper at Swinfen Hall
Organised by Harry Medcalf

Thursday 23rd July
Club General Meeting
'A Humorous Look at Retirement'

Speaker: Mr David Berry
Newsletter Report; David Tiffin
Vote of Thanks: Barry Gill

**Kitchen Rota; Jim Bailey,
John Cheal, Ray Clark,
Rod Crowley, John Vickers**

Friday 24th– Sunday 26th July
Weekend in Liverpool
Organised by Jim Bailey

Monday 3rd August
Long Walk led by Barry Gill

Saturday August 9th Summer BBQ
Organised by John Buckland

Thursday 27th August
Club General Meeting
Canine Partners Charity
Dogs for the disabled

Speaker: Julia Hurley
Newsletter Report: David Tiffin
Vote of Thanks: Neil Crabb

**Kitchen Rota: John Carrington,
Alf Dineen, John Fellows,
Mike Gospel, David Tiffin**

Thursday 3rd September
Long Walk led by Dennis Rose

Friday 4th—8th September
Autumn Break Organised by Mike Gospel

Thursday 17th September
Pub Amble led by Geoff Sylvester

Thursday 24th September
Club General Meeting.
'The Past Beneath our Feet'

Speaker: Jan Wall
Newsletter Report—Mike Haynes
Vote of Thanks - Dennis Perkins

**Kitchen Rota; Richard Humphrey,
Brian Mallett, Alan Powers,
Dennis Rose, Mike Terry.**

Members are reminded that if they want to join the Amblers for a pub lunch they must pre-book their place and / or their meal requirements in advance!

‘OUR MAN OF LETTERS’

Having qualified as a Naval Architect, I realised, with Navy cut-backs that I’d made the wrong career choice. So I left Cowes and got a job in Birmingham, I knew no one and I had nowhere to live. Calling at the Council House reception they produced a list of ‘digs’ and I settled in. Little did I imagine that 35 years later I would walk in the main door and up the red carpet as Lord Mayor.

Birmingham is the largest Municipal Authority in Europe and Jenny and I had a very busy year. We attended around 1200 functions, visiting many schools, businesses, elder resident’s homes, eating many dinners and being in attendance at Royal visits (21 in total). We also did official visit to India, Germany, Italy and Chicago. We met Heads of State and many ‘personalities’ Our son who accompanied me on ‘sports’ events was pleased to meet Pele.

Birmingham with the NEC, ICC and NIA and 3 universities (I became Chancellor of what is now Birmingham City University), together with improved sports grounds is a magnet for conferences and entertainment and many are delighted to have the Lord Mayor with them. Some like John Major are great raconteurs; Mrs Thatcher wasn’t, but we were privileged to look after her on 2 visits. My personal favourite was Mary Robinson, President of Ireland, who we entertained to lunch and she provided dinner, she was an absolute delight.

We spent our full final day in office looking after Harry Secombe and his wife. **Hon. Ald. David Roy OBE**

A MERSEYSIDE ANNUS MIRABILIS FOR THE THREE QUEENS CUNARD CELEBRATES 170 YEARS OF BLUE RIBAND LINERS (were you there?)

It wasn’t a day for a ‘Ferry Cross the Mersey’ as Gerry & the Pacemakers sang; with a chill, blustery, Easterly wind whipping from The Whirral into our faces as Janet and I were overlooked by the larger than life statue of Billy Fury, Liverpool’s own pop icon of the ‘50’s.

After a two hour wait in our early-bird slot at 9.30 am we saw three fog shrouded shapes emerge from the Mersey mist at noon. Yes! it was the once in a lifetime visit of the 3 Queens for the 170th Anniversary of the Cunard Shipping Line, the Liverpool based dynasty. We’d seen the QM2 at her berth the day before but now she was leading her two sisters QE (actually QE3) and the QV past the Liver Birds abreast the Cunard building. We were now hemmed in by hundreds of thousands of craning viewers as the three cruise liners did a twirl and ‘river dance’ albeit very, very, very slowly – paint drying could have been as exciting! Every on-board Queens’ space was crammed with waving passengers just as the Red Arrows zipped out of the clouds overhead as I snapped a quick pic.



Our lack lustre on-river entertainment (no expense spared) during our 4 hour marathon were three jet-skiers, one of whom was given an enthusiastic cheer when he fell off! What an opportunity missed we thought. Finally the Queen Elizabeth (3) rereplaced the Queen Mary 2 at the dockside while the Queen Victoria sailed away down the Mersey packed with passengers off to distant, much warmer climes.

The crowds melted away, the sun came out belatedly and Janet and I made our way home to Brum happy in the knowledge that we had witnessed a unique event on the Mersey.

Report & photos - Dale Lyons

MAKING YOUR APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

If you are unable to attend a General Meeting please advise **Alan Powers** by the **Sunday** before that General Meeting.

If you are unable to carry out your duties on the Kitchen Rota then please try and ‘swap’ with someone from the following month, advising **John Vickers** of the change.

If you are unable to carry out the Vote of Thanks or write the Newsletter Report please get in touch **Dale Lyons**, **well before** that General Meeting. My absolute deadline for reports & news is the **Saturday before** the next monthly meeting. dale@5rhg.co.uk

Avoncroft Museum Visit - A blast from the past.



As Avoncroft is dedicated to the preservation and presentation of historic buildings, the museum displays a vast collection over 19 acres of parkland. Fortunately it was a perfect day for our visit. I will refrain from describing all the 25 buildings a few ‘tasty’ examples are the 15th century threshing barn recovered from Leominster; the 19thc counting house, recovered from Bromsgrove cattle market; the Toll house recovered from Upton on Severn; the 1940’s prefab, and the chain house recovered from Cradley



Heath. All were fascinating. However, the piece de resistance for me was Guesten Hall, a medieval meeting hall built in the 14th Century, and an outbuilding of Worcester Cathedral. It was transferred to Holy Trinity Church, Shrub Hill and eventually to Avoncroft when the church closed in 1970. We had an first rate and knowledgeable guide on the tour which ended in Avoncroft’s café for an excellent buffet lunch.

President Fred gave a vote of thanks to Jan & Mike Gospel for arranging the visit and the ‘ideal’ summer’s day. The visit was a trip down memory lane for Kate and me as our son had his wedding registered in Guesten Hall and the church blessing in the Mission Church, another of the historic buildings on site. www.avoncroft.org.uk for additional information.

Report-Mike Haynes Photos – Rita Rooke & Tony Fernyhough



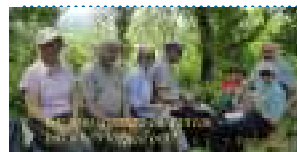
Garrick Theatre visit 4th June 2015 – ‘Buddy’

A large group attended the Garrick Theatre to see the musical “Buddy” which had been organised by Brian Mallett, a fitting end to his 10 years’ service on the Social Committee. The main characters were excellently support by backing singers and enthusiastic dancers. The show celebrated the meteoric rise to fame of the singer and song writer Buddy Holly. In his short 2 year career he became a rock and roll legend topping the American charts 7 times and his music legacy was to inspire future generations of musicians. He died in an air crash in February 1959 an event immortalized in Don McLean’s “American Pie” as “the day the music died”, along with Ricky Vallance and The Big Bopper. The show ended with his Fender Stratocaster Guitar being poignantly spotlighted on an empty stage, followed by a rip roaring finale by the whole cast bringing the audience to their feet.

Report - Allan Powers



PROBUS - LONG WALK - EDGEHILL - 4 JUNE 2015



The troops assembled to the East of Edgehill eager to do battle with the challenging terrain. We set off in glorious sunshine armed with walking sticks and Werthers Originals. This was a walk which showed the English countryside at its best for 6.5 miles or so – rolling hills, gentle climbs and shaded woodland, which was filled with an amazing array of flowers. Lunch was taken on the Escarpment with views some fifteen miles beyond. Just before concluding the walk we were offered an optional extra, namely the opportunity to take liquid refreshments at the local Castle Pub, overlooking the battlefield of Edgehill. The proposal was carried by a majority of seventeen to nil - impressive as there were just thirteen on the walk!! We suspect the ladies voted twice, a voting system that FIFA would have been proud of. Our thanks to Geoff and Sheila for organising a most enjoyable day



Report - David Rooke. Photos – Rita Rooke

WALK & EVENTS PLANNER/REPORTS

Pub Amble Thursday 16th July—Slitting Mill (Rugeley).

The Amble will start at the Horns Inn Car Park, Slitting Mill, Rugeley. The Walk is approx 3 miles long, no stiles, hopefully no mud, slightly undulating, passing through woodland, alongside a stream and 3 Lakes. The walk will start at 10-45; lunch will be at 12-15, 2 courses for £12-50 excellent food.

Directions from Streetly: To Lichfield on A5127. Then follow signs to Rugeley on A51. At the outskirts of Rugeley, Island, turn Left sign posted Town Centre. Continue on Dual Carriageway, under Railway Arch, Mini Island Straight on, Large Island straight on (A51 Stone). First set of lights turn Left towards Slitting Mill. Approx ¾ mile turn Left sign posted Slitting Mill, Horns Inn is a little distance on your Left. **Organisers - Mike Taylor and Barry Parsonage.**



The Martley Circular – Long Walk Monday 3rd August

This is a lovely walk of 6.5 miles in the Teme Valley and centred on the village of Martley, near Great Witley. It passes through traditional orchards, pastures and ancient woodlands before climbing onto a ridge with views across Worcestershire. The final section of the walk is along the River Teme. Journey time from the Sutton area is about 50 minutes to 1 hour. Meet at St Peter's Church car park in the village to begin the walk at 10.30 a.m. Distance from Sutton area is 41 miles.

Directions - take M5 to Junction 5 (Droitwich), then A.38 signed Worcester. After 2-3 miles take A.4133 (A.433) to Ombersley and Tenbury Wells, passing Holt Heath and Little Witley to Great Witley. Turn left on B.4197 to Martley (31/2 miles). On entering village turn left at garage and follow signs to St Peter's Church, Park at bottom of Church Lane in car park. **Organiser – Barry Gill**



STONNALL AMBLE REPORT THURSDAY 18TH JUNE

It was an easy walk with panoramic views from about halfway. As we walked we saw goats, horses with a young foal and singing skylarks. Being June the weather was good and just right for ambling. Thirty five Probians and guests had an excellent lunch at the 'Old Swan' in Stonnall and if the noise from the Amblers was a guide everyone enjoyed themselves tremendously. Many thanks to Geoff for his erudite organisation.

Report - Roy Willson



FROM OUR NORTHERN CORRESPONDENT – ILLKEY MOOR B'AT HAT! THE 2014 TOUR RETURNS - ALMOST!

The vast crowds have gone, the bunting and flags have been taken down and Ilkley, like the rest of Yorkshire has returned to its wonderful stately self again. The Tour de France was such a money spinner when the cycling circus came through the area last year it was decided to stage it again but this time just in Yorkshire, not daft up 'ere th'know. Side roads on the route the cyclists would take were closed at dawn from one end of the county to the other causing lots of confusion. But thousands entered, the crowds came and the money poured in again and I'm pleased to say that being a 'Hate the Cyclists' supporter we went on holiday to the Rockies and Alaska the day before the event and missed it (well they do ride around in gaggles and clog up the narrow roads round here and what's wrong these days with plus-fours and cycle clips!!)

Report - Don Cooper (SPPC ret.)



MORE PHOTOS FROM SICILY



YOUR IDEAS FOR THE NEWSLETTER ARE VALUABLE SO PLEASE FINISH THE SENTENCE BELOW AND HAND IT TO DALE. THANK YOU.

I THINK THE NEWSLETTER SHOULD