

Summer Barbecue, Advance Warning!

HOWDY FOLKS! This is an early warning message for your diaries. The annual BBQ this year has been moved back to **Sunday August 9th**.

In the past we have hired traditional Jazz bands and Caribbean bands so this year your future president decided to try something different, and after much searching I have hired a top Country band. Tony Wall and his music have played in America, and have also appeared on both TV and radio. He has a large website if you want to get the feel of his music.

Marquees have been ordered and our usual Pig Roast will be provided, also all drinks. The venue is as always the Fellows ranch at Middleton. Do wear Western costumes, but no guns please!

Let's make this a bumper year as the event may possibly be coming to an end in the future. The event board will be out in May, so make sure that your names are on it as places are limited by the size of the Marquee.

- John Buckland



Lesson learned!

After nearly two years at the helm my tenure at the Newsletter Desk is drawing to a close and I thought I'd ruminate for a moment on a lesson recently learned. It's about the way I put captions on pictures, which members might have noticed aren't always strictly literally correct, aiming to use a play on words, a pun or a merry quip to provoke a raised eyebrow or a little smile, something intended to add a bit of personality to the Newsletter.

So, for instance, last time I ran a picture of John Cheal standing in the doorway of the hardware shop at the Black Country Museum.

If I'd just written that as a caption it would have been boring in the extreme, so instead I made up an imaginary quote, "Don't call me Arkwright!", which I thought might bring a little flicker of recognition and amusement.

That one came straight from my subconscious after a week of enforced idleness at Moor Hall watching repeats of 'Open All Hours' every afternoon, but no-one, I hope, least of all John himself, would imagine for a moment that I was suggesting he was the mean old skinflint of the television programme!

In the same issue we had a picture of three of our ladies at the 'Bucks Fizz' reception. They looked very nice, I thought, in differently-tinted pink tops, and from that the caption almost wrote itself, 'Fifty Shades of Pink'. I didn't give it a second thought, perhaps because by this time it was 2.30am on the Monday morning and I needed to get the issue finished before we drove up from Bournemouth later in the day. But alas, that little caption upset at least one person as I was subsequently advised, even though absolutely no other meaning was intended. So that's the lesson learned—not everyone has the same sense of humour and it's easy to inadvertently cause offence. Dale, be careful, be *very* careful!

- Peter Weston

MAKING YOUR APOLOGIES: If you are 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 Proboscis Club

(Founded 1998)

President: John Fellows

Newsletter

No. 195

March 2015

February Speaker; "An Inspector Calls" by David Howe Report by Allan Powers

*"Are we sitting comfortably?
Then I'll begin."*



David began by asking how valid our systems of school inspections really were. "One Friday afternoon I attended an award ceremony at Sutton Town Hall for Midlands 'Teacher of the Year'," he said, and afterwards was congratulating two teachers from a school who were there with their Deputy Head.

"I said they could now relax and enjoy the rest of the day, but to my surprise they said they had to go straight back to the school because they were waiting to hear whether it was going to be put under special measures. So two of the top teachers in the country were going to be told that their school was inadequate; doesn't this rather question how these things are done?"

This was the first of a string of reflections and anecdotes from David's career in education. Born in Rugby and graduated from the University of Warwick, he had taught in three schools, had been a university lecturer, school inspector, governor and writer. He had taken his title from the J.B Priestley play of the same name, 'An Inspector Calls'.

He then continued with some amusing stories from his days as a School Inspector. For example, one teacher was rather disconcerted to be asked how to spell 'ponce'. Being somewhat concerned at where the child might have heard this word he asked him to use it in a sentence, and the reply duly came back, "Once a ponce a time....!"

Cont/d.....

Another teacher was asked by a young child if he knew how to make babies. After attempts to avoid the question, the child said scornfully, "You don't know, do you. It's easy, you simply replace the 'y' with an 'i' and add 'es'."

You never know what a child is going to say, David told us, and sometimes they answer a question in ways which aren't so much 'wrong' as 'unexpected', but which might make perfect sense to them. For instance, when he was asked "What is Lord Baden-Powell's name connected with?", the pupil answered, "a hyphen".

We laughed, but as David said, perhaps the previous lesson had been about English, so of course the child would think quite understandably, "oh, it's just another question on punctuation."

In the same vein we had "What is a terminal illness?" (Answer: "When you're sick at the airport"), "What is Britain's highest award for bravery?" ("Nelson's Column"), and "What is a nitrate?" ("Cheaper than the day-rate").

And children often give the game away, even when the class is supposedly unaware of the purpose of the visit. Like the occasion a teacher pointed to a notice which said, 'Do not leave half-eaten sandwiches in the cloakroom because they tend to attract unwelcome visitors.' "Now, class," she said, "in this context what do we mean by 'unwelcome visitors'?" Answer there came; "school inspectors, miss."

But David also had a serious side to his talk. He briefly went through the history of schools, which originally were only funded by the Church or rich local benefactors. Central government then provided Board Schools to plug the gaps where there were no Church Schools, and eventually decided they should be brought together and invested £20,000 into education, across the whole country.

However there were only two School Inspectors and having decided these were not going to be sufficient the authorities introduced a system of school testing. This resulted in a system of tests, inspection and payment by results, and many believe this is what has been re-introduced over the last few years with Ofsted.

David's opinion was that tests were a good thing "but not the bee-all and end-all of everything". His concern was what happens to those areas of Education (such as practical, vocational subjects) that are not covered by "tests". He also said that teachers are being asked to do far more these days, and that 40% of primary school teachers leave the profession within the first four years, which he thought was a horrifying statistic.

He concluded with a word about the old-style school reports, reminding us how your whole year's efforts could be dismissed by one word or phrase, like "disappointing, "could do better"; and "must try harder".

One teacher marked a report with 3Bs and 3Cs, then wrote "has not". When he was questioned on this, he said that if the parents looked at the previous year's report they would see he had written "could do better", and of course this year he "has not".

David finished by asking us to tidy up, put our chairs away, stand up and see that there is no litter under the table, and when ready he would dismiss us row by row.

It was an entertaining, thought-provoking and highly enjoyable talk by a master of his craft. Roger Phillips gave the Vote of Thanks.

- Allan Powers

RECENT ADDRESS CHANGES—PLEASE NOTE;

Don Cooper, 7 Marlborough Square, Ilkley, West Yorkshire, LS 29 8PU. New telephone number is 01943-968323. E-mail unchanged.

Peter Weston, 7 Maplewood, Sutton Coldfield, B76 1JX. New tel; 0121 313 3071.

Derek Smith, A tribute by Don Cooper



At President's Supper,
June 2013.

It is like cramming a quart into a pint pot when trying to write a short tribute to Derek, so many stories must be left out. In Round Table days his house parties were legendary. In early BBC Pebble Mill days he was involved in farming programmes amongst others and he was a superb Father Christmas each year at the staff childrens' party. He became Producer of *Top Gear* where later I had the pleasure to work for him.

I found out the moment I entered the office the first morning that he, as Producer, was the boss; no favours would be given and only the best work possible would be accepted.

There followed a period of intense excitement and fun. He was demanding, an ideas generator who infuriatingly would often better any suggestions the rest of us made, but on Fridays, if all of us were present, a bunch of keys would be thrown into the middle of the office and we would all scramble to get one and if lucky have a supercar for the weekend.

So many stories here, like his absolute refusal to pay a world champion his fee for reviewing very poorly and casually some new cars that we had delivered to Sutton Park. At the same time he started off the whole Black Country humour scene after he turned the small studio where Midland News came from into a pub, complete with barrels of Black Country beer (his favourite) and engaged unknown comics to act as customers who then became famous.

On retirement Derek became a tour guide leading groups to the WW1 and the D-Day battlefields and took on as well as his home garden two allotments just to keep busy. He also managed to fit in annual trips to Argentina to help his son at grape-gathering time and also I am sure help him drink some of the previous year's produce. His pride and joy was a narrow boat he kept on a local canal until he forgot to turn off a vital tap when leaving it one night and it ended up on the bottom of the canal.

Who can forget the Probus walks he led in different sections of Sutton Park, so full of information, and often when he strayed from the truth, given with a twinkle in his eye and a touch of a smile. The talk he gave at one meeting involving a tape recorder was typical of how he could turn a disaster into one of the most hilarious meetings we have ever had.

Derek was thoughtful and helpful to new members as many of you will have experienced. He had a lovely sense of humour, was a great host and always a perfect gentleman. There will not be another like him.

- Don Cooper

Funeral arrangements: Wednesday April 8th 2015 at 12.45pm., Streetly Crematorium, Little Hardwick Road, Aldridge, West Midlands WS9 0SG. The family request that there be no flowers. Donations can be made to The Stroke Association at www.stroke.org.uk/donation

There will be a gathering of family and friends after the Funeral, at The Veseyans Sports Club, which is directly opposite the crematorium, to which everyone is invited.



Derek on Probus holiday in
Krakow, Poland.

Thursday 12th March, Visit to the Birmingham Assay Office
Arranged by Bob Badham, Report by Alfred Wallwork, Photos by Rita Rooke



The building, and famous 'Anchor' mark.



Our party of thirty met outside the office, which lies at the junction of Newhall Street and Charlotte Street, a splendid late Victorian building, built in 1877, although the first site was more modest, just three rooms in the Kings Head Inn in New Street (long since gone).

It opened on 31 August 1773, after lobbying of Parliament by local industrialists for the establishment of an assay office in the city, and the first customer on that day was Matthew Boulton from the Soho Works. The Jewellery Quarter once employed over 40,000 people, so assaying was very important to the city.

The Curator and Silver Specialist, Mr Craig O'Donnell, delivered a long and detailed talk, after which we visited the silver exhibition room to see some amazingly beautiful objects. Everyone was suitably impressed although David Rooke was heard to comment that the men were relieved to see all that silver and jewellery on display with none available to buy!

As Mr O'Donnell explained, by law items made of precious metals need to be assayed to guarantee quality, and this applies to a wide variety of items ranging from large trophy plates to small vinaigrette boxes. A code or Hallmark is then stamped on the article, which as viewers of the Antique Road Trip will know is vitally important in determining its worth.



Above: Ghostly images of Probusarians flit among the display cabinets full of beautiful silverware.

(Although I can't help wondering what is to stop someone in China from counterfeiting the hallmarks on a fake item of silverware? They copy everything else. Illegal, of course, but who would know?).

It was a fascinating visit and afterwards we visited the Shakespeare pub on Summer Row, another piece of old Birmingham, where we enjoyed a good lunch. Our thanks to Bob Badham for making the arrangements for this very successful trip.

- Alfred Wallwork

Friday February 27th, Skittles Night at Lea Marston
Report by John Buckland, pictures by Tony Ferneyhough



Above; 'Well, someone has to do the work!'

Below; Plotting tactics! (it's not a game, you know).



Right; And the winners are....

More photos on the club website.



Below; Rod takes aim!



Above; 'I said someone has to do the work and it's your turn!'

Once again we had the annual Probus trek to Lea Marston leisure centre for a highly competitive skittle evening, attended by those brave souls able to negotiate Dunton Island. Most did arrive on time as ordered by Jim, and the evening commenced with teams designated by table.

The photographs taken by Tony speak for themselves and an excellent evening of skittles was supplemented by plenty of food with seconds for those that required it. Top team comprised the Locks, Bucklands, Malletts, Wallworks, Tony Ferneyhough and John Cheal. We all went home clutching a pot plant as a reward for our endeavours, while an interesting quiz was won by the president's table, all members going home with blocks of chocolate! The raffle was well-supported and the event was well organised by Mike & Janet Gospel and Jim & Sylvia Bailey.

- John Buckland



*On top of
the World!*

‘March Long March’*, or Long Walk around Malvern, Thursday 5th March Led by David Rooke, photographs from Rita

In addition to the extensive and dramatic views that inevitably accompany any trip to the Malvern Hills, this walk in the southern part of the range embraced a variety of terrain and considerable historic interest. It began by descending the slopes of the Herefordshire Beacon to the remains of 15th Century Little Malvern Priory with its magnificent topiary and gardens.

We continued across the flat and open expanse of Castlemorton Common, a relic of the medieval hunting grounds of Malvern Chase. After stopping for refreshments at the disused, picturesque Gullet Quarry we entered Eastnor Park before climbing steadily to the ridge where a 360° view stretching 20 miles lay beneath us.

The famous obelisk, a memorial to the Somers Family, seemed to follow us



*Far left: The Obelisk
Left; ‘Fancy having
to cut this lot, Geoff!’
Below: A fine body of
men (& two women).*



as we progressed the ridge, past Clutters (Giant’s) Cave and up to the summit of the Herefordshire Beacon.

At 1114 feet, the second highest point on the Malverns, it is the site of a large Iron Age Fort. With high banks and deep ditches the outer ramparts are 2 km in circumference, measures 30 acres and could have housed up to 20,000 people. Thereafter a steady descent to earn a well deserved lunch at the Malvern Hills Hotel.

- David Rooke



** [One of my little allusions, again! - pw]*



*Above: Tucking in—all that fresh air doesn’t half
give one an appetite!*

Shropshire has surprises in store at every turn, with wonderful vistas enhanced by great spring sunshine. Evenings were spent eating out, or enjoying *ad hoc* buffets at base, with fellowship continuing over filled wine glasses until late evening.

Three renegades spent Saturday at Ludlow viewing the wonderful castle and Parish Church, followed by a visit to the fortified house at Stokesay for a day of history concerned with the English Civil War of the 17th Century. On Sunday the only wet morning, we journeyed to Welshpool to see Powys Castle inside whilst it poured down outside.

Following a typical Welsh Sunday lunch the blue skies returned, so we completed a great day with a local walk guided by Rod in the neighbourhood of Upper Norton. Everyone appeared to have enjoyed their brief holiday together in Shropshire, so perhaps another similar trip might happen again at another venue next year?

- Brian Spencer

COVENTRY HALF MARATHON— A ‘WHEELIE’ TOUGH 13.1

The final stages of Dale’s wheelchair training for the next London Marathon

‘Yes, it’s definitely suitable for wheelchairs’ said the Coventry Half Marathon organiser. Never was a quote so inaccurate! The 3,500 runners and one wheelchair were squeezed into miles of the course only fifteen feet wide. Hundreds of runners were hooked up to iphones, mobiles, ipods and radios and couldn’t hear me screaming ‘**wheelchair on your right!**’ It was eight miles uphill and five down!

The country sections were a nightmare of potholes, uneven surfaces and vertiginous bends. Mile 8 took me over 15 minutes – runners were even asking if I wanted a push – naturally I declined. The roads widened after mile 9 so I speeded up with a 7-minute mile at the 12th and I flashed through the finish in 2:18:15, but 20 minutes slower than the Robin Hood Half.

It was without doubt the toughest race so far but an excellent workout. I certainly won’t have to work so hard in the London Marathon on April 26th! Next up is the Silverstone Half on April 15, so plenty of room around the race track and no hills.

- Dale Lyons



*Dale ready to roll the
Coventry Half Marathon*

Long Walk Group, Walking Week in Shropshire: report & pics by Brian Spencer

Last summer members of the Long Walking Group were invited to take part in a week's walking holiday trip to Upper Norton near Ludlow in Shropshire. Sixteen members and wives in



two groups of eight shared two cottages at the Holiday Property Bond Site from March 2nd - 9th.

The first group consisting of Fred and Pat Ditchfield, John and Maggie Carrington, John and Margaret Vickers, and two friends Kelvin and Jill, arrived at their allotted cottages on Monday 2nd March. The plush accommodation was much appreciated, and I understand that site manager Francesca Biddlecombe looked after their day-to-day needs admirably.

A long walk in the Wenlock Edge area was completed on the first day, followed by a splendid evening meal at The Green Dragon at Church Stretton. A visit to nearby Ludlow was also on the list for non-walkers, and evening entertainment was enjoyed in the Club House at least once. The three-day break quickly came to an end, and a meeting of the first and second groups was arranged for lunch again at Church Stretton but in the Housman Bistro and Bar. Here a very adequate lunch was provided, and we swapped information between the groups in regard to walks and eating out places.

Group two, comprised Rod and Hilary Crowley, Barry and Carol Gill, Mike and Yvonne Lock and yours truly and Dorothy, who having said their goodbyes arrived at site in mid-afternoon to take over the two allotted cottages. There followed on consecutive days two walks organised by Barry, to Croft Castle near Presteigne, and Aston-on-Clun near Craven Arms, each about four or so miles in length in beautiful countryside.



Top left: Rest stop, and Mike shows the way ahead.

Above: Ludlow Castle from the rear side.

Below: Splendid old church tower.



Saturday 7th March, Spring Dining Event at Walmley Golf Club

Report & pictures by Peter Weston

It's a bit difficult to report on an event like this unless someone does something spectacular, like taking too much red wine on board and doing a song-&-dance routine on the table. Of course, Probus people are far too refined for such behaviour, alas.

This was the first time Eileen and I had been to an event for a couple of months, what with living as refugees in other parts of the country and my own health problems, and of course we enjoyed it very much. Years ago our Rotary club held events at the Walmley club and it hadn't changed a bit, apart from the importation of the French chef and consequent improvement in food served. Dinner was indeed delicious although I have to confess being a little disappointed with my starter, 'crispy duck confit'. Yes,

delicious, but not the slightest bit crispy!

So what did happen? Absolutely nothing really, although there was a pleasant buzz of conversation from the various tables. I had a long chat with Ivor (whom I've always regarded as a man of great mystery) who said something about when guests overstayed their



Above: There's Tony enjoying himself, the rotter, without a care in the world (or his camera) which is why I had to take these pictures with my mobile phone, and no flash.



Left: Dale dreams about his next Marathon, or maybe he was thinking about the way he's going to improve the Newsletter. 'Great jacket', I told him.

welcome, giving me chance to wheel out the Oscar Wilde remark that "guests are like fish, after three days they begin to stink". Sylvia rather liked that one!

Attendance was probably about sixty, since due to date changes the event had clashed with one of Brian Spencer's private-enterprise away events. John Fellows did the honours and thanked Harry for organising an excellent night, and I would like to add a personal note of thanks to Joan who took me by the hand and led me to the little room which I would otherwise never, ever have found unaided. - pw



Above: I loved June's multicolour dress though the picture doesn't do it justice. Why didn't I ask her to stand up and do a twirl?

Diary of events and activities to July 2015

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; David Rooke**

Friday 10-Saturday 11th April

Spring Weekend Break

at the Royal Boar Hotel, Sudbury

Organised by John Cheale

Monday 13th April

Long Walk led by John Carrington

Thursday 16th April

Pub Amble around Whittington

Led by Rod Crowley

**Thursday 23rd April
Club A.G.M**

Newsletter Report: Peter Weston

Kitchen Rota: Keith Keeley

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 21st May

Visit to Avoncroft Museum

Organised by Mike Gospel

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.

Thursday 28th May Club General Meeting

'The Restoration of Middleton Hall'

Speaker; Brian Teall

Newsletter Report: Selby Betts

Vote of Thanks: Jim Bailey

Kitchen Rota; Mike Lock,

Ian Scholes, Roy Galloway,

Dennis Wright, Dennis Perkins

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

Thursday 18th June

Pub Amble around Rugeley,

Led by Mike Terry

**Thursday 25th June
Club General Meeting**

'The Staffordshire Regiment;

The Battle of the Somme, 1916'

Speaker: Mr David Shergold

Newsletter Report: Brian Harbourn

Vote of Thanks: Peter Terleski

Kitchen Rota; Peter Gray,

Dale Lyons, 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

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

Members have already been advised of this short 2-night 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 (now fully booked).
- 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 Whittington, led by Rod Crowley

Start from the Whittington Arms, on the Tamworth Road, Lichfield, WS149PS, opposite Whittington Golf Course, on the right-hand side as you travel up the hill on the A51, about half a mile past the Horse and Jockey. The amble is about 3.5 miles, no stiles, mostly flat but with a couple of gentle inclines, some farm-track mud, depending on weather. You will be able to see the survey poles for HS2, through the field past the rifle ranges. Walking time approx. two hours.

Meet at the back of the car park at 10.00 am for a prompt 10.15 start. For those just coming for the meal, we are booked for 12.30, but please let me know in advance. We can choose from the menu and order on the day. Copies of the menu will be available at the March meeting. There is a wide choice, from snacks to a full meal, with a fixed price two-course lunch for £11.95. My mobile number (on the day only); 07949 621 809.
- Rod Crowley

Thursday 7th May, Election Day Long Walk around Melbourne, led by Mike Lock

This is a 5½ mile, circular walk from Melbourne, close to the border with Leicestershire. It will be over parkland and pastureland and crosses the Breedon Priory Golf Course. With several friendly stiles and one steep hill, the walk should take about 3-3½ hours, including a stop for a sandwich lunch at Breedon-on-the-Hill. Alternatively there is a good café there at the Priory Centre should you wish to buy a snack or lunch. There could be a few muddy patches if it rains beforehand. Start at Melbourne's parish church of St Michael & St Mary. There is space for car parking, toilet facilities and a tea room, etc. close by. Meet at 10.45 for an 11.00 start at OS Map 245 grid ref 389 250 (DE73 8JH).
- Mike Lock

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

Three-mile walk, no stiles, with lunch at the Appleby Inn Hotel (two courses, tea/coffee, £11.00). We start from the inn at Appleby Parva, Nr. Swadlincote, DE12 7AP at 10.30am. Take M42 to junction 11, then A444 towards Nuneaton, pub is two miles on right-hand side. Time from Sutton Coldfield about forty minutes.
- John Fellows

Thursday 21st May, Visit to Avoncroft Museum of Historical Buildings

This visit includes tea/coffee and cake on arrival at 10.30a.m., followed by a guided tour and buffet lunch. A visit to Jinny Ring Craft Centre is planned for the afternoon. The cost of the visit is £15.50pp. A shared car arrangement applies. Participants will be advised of the route and of other members attending.
- Mike Gospel

Thursday 4th June, Long Walk near Banbury, led by Geoff Silvester

This will be around Edge Hill near Banbury, and I would describe it as a moderately difficult walk of seven miles. Further details nearer the time.
- Geoff Silvester