

Don Cooper sent me an amusing little e-mail compiled by a friend in South Africa who says, "English is a crazy language and here's some examples:-

"There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat. As English speakers we tend to take English for granted, but if we explore its paradoxes we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a species of pig.

"And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham? If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth, beeth? One goose, two geese, so why not one moose, two meese? Why one index, two indices? You can make amends but not one amend? If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it? If teachers taught why don't preachers praught? If a vegetarian eats vegetables what does a humanitarian eat?

"Why do people recite at a play and play at a recital? How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites? Your house can burn up as it burns down, you fill in a form by filling it out and an alarm goes off by going on. Not to mention cricket where you go in until you're out and then because you're out you come in.

"English was invented by people not computers and it reflects the creativity of the human race, which of course, is not a race at all. That is why, when the stars are out they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible."

And here's another book I received as a Christmas present.....

This one is titled 'Stuff Matters - the strange stories of the marvellous materials that shape our man-made world'. Well, if that hasn't put you off, I'll go on to explain that it's by no means all about clever stuff like turbine blades or nanotechnology. In fact the first four chapters are about pretty mundane substances like steel, paper, concrete and chocolate.

But there are fascinating stories behind the discovery of each one which the author, Mark Miodownik, succeeds in explaining in matter-of-fact layman's language. He presented the Royal Institution's Christmas lectures in 2010 on the same theme—and jolly interesting they were too.

Yes, there is a bit of hi-tech, with one chapter on an incredible lightweight foam and one on carbon fibres and something called 'graphene'. However, it was the chapter on glass that gave me a genuinely new perspective on the world.

It's marvellous stuff when you really think about it, and the author explains that it was the Romans who first brought glass into everyday use, learning how to blow thin-walled wine-glasses, for instance, and how to make it fully transparent. But here's the amazing bit; he says that while the Chinese knew how to make glass they pretty much ignored it. As a result they never invented the telescope or the microscope, or the prism, or all the other glassware you need to mess around with chemistry and physics. Despite their technological sophistication right into the late Middle Ages the Chinese never instigated a scientific revolution of their own and Miodownik wonders if this is the reason why not. A fascinating insight, I thought! [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.186

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THE CLUB AGM—2014

'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.'

(or is that from the Norman? Must ask Mrs Millen)

Some of the committee members changed but everything remained pretty much the same, although the AGM did seem to go on a bit this year. Maybe it was just me—after all, last year was my first such and now I'm more of a veteran. Certainly it wasn't the fault of outgoing President Rod who quoted the American comedian George Burns in his valedictory address, "the secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, and to keep them as close as possible to each other."

He commented on the club's success in having to some extent rejuvenated itself (that word again!) by recruiting nine new members in the last couple of years and ensuring that all of them (us) have settled comfortably into the club's way of doing things. He said that the committee would be continuing this policy for another year at least by allowing membership numbers to rise to the maximum sixty, particularly since two further applications had already been received.

Cont/d....

For his part incoming President John thanked Rod for his efforts and noted that during his year the club had arranged no less than 42 events, of which he had attended all but two and that was probably a record. Knowing that Rod was a keen gardener John said that he could go back to his allotment and as Lady Chatterley said to her boyfriend, “now was a good time to put your taters in”. Our new President clearly has a way with words, as demonstrated by his little rhyme about the work of the Welfare Committee:-

‘We had one ankle, one knee, and hips by two,
A case of shingles and a few bouts of ‘flu,
bad backs, and strokes, and a death, too.
We have problems with prostates and back passages two,
I know that sounds crude but I’m afraid it is true.
We have heart problems in one or two of you,
But with our friends in Probus we’ll surely pull through.’

Turning to the accounts, Fred Nightingale expressed concern at a perceived discrepancy between budget (£42) and expenditure account (£41) which Brian Harbourne adroitly fielded. Then Fred Ditchfield proceeded to blind us with science with a proposal to amend some wording in the Constitution relating to Mike Terry’s job-title.

He said that since he had put forward the proposal someone else had suggested a better wording, so Fred proposed that we should vote on a proposal to change his proposal to propose a change in the name of the position to something or other (I lost track at this stage), but we duly voted, twice, and the amendment went through. Good old Fred!

By this stage John was probably a bit confused by all this because when he invited the new Treasurer to his place on the top table he called for ‘Fred Dineen’. To shouts from the audience of “not another one!” Alf took his seat, protesting that his name wasn’t actually ‘Alfred’ but ‘Alphonse’, which those of us in the back row thought was a great name for a hairdresser. Afterwards, Alf confirmed he wasn’t having us on and that really *was* his name—“I was one of seven,” he said, “and by the time she came to me my mother had run out of other names.”

Fun and games aside, the serious business is that the club is solvent, in fine good health, and with a busy programme of activities scheduled for the coming year. For which everyone gave a round of applause, both to thank the outgoing committee and in appreciation of the incoming team. [pw]

**June Speaker: ‘Bringing Theatre to Africa’
Presented by Mr Ian Appleby**

Ian Appleby taught English and drama for nearly forty years and is involved with local activities such as Sutton Arts Theatre. After retirement he went to South Africa to visit a friend who was out there with the British Council, and he discovered that life in some of the black townships was spiritually a bit bleak, lacking anything much in the way of what we might call ‘culture’, music or drama. So motivated, Ian has for several years helped to run musical projects in a school for 16-18 year-olds, organising and directing such shows as ‘The Mikado’ to name but one. In his talk he will tell us about his successes and failures and some of the unexpected consequences!

On returning to Rolls Royce I was trained as a test pilot under Jim Heyworth, and was later seconded to Vickers Armstrong under Brian Trubshaw. I owe so much to these two talented and generous individuals! In the fullness of time I was appointed to the board. Interestingly, I ended up with the same qualifications as my father and I don’t know who was more amazed, him or me!

None of this interrupted my racing. As a young man I raced wonderful British bikes for the great Geoff Duke of 1950’s Norton fame. Rolls Royce put a stop to this, but they failed to mention that I was also racing cars, and I have been fortunate in driving for a various manufacturers and corporate sponsors over the years. I sit on the councils of a number of organisations associated with motor-sport and aviation and still hold a competition licence. Nowadays I only race historic cars, and most of those are owned by other people. I can’t afford to write off my own cars!

I continue to hold both commercial and private pilot licences, and regularly fly executive jets and a variety of historic aircraft for a family trust. I’m still besotted by the Spitfire that I’m privileged to be able to fly. The cough of the Merlin engine as she fires and the momentary flame shooting down the exposed manifolds still mesmerises me, as does the heady mix of oil and aviation fuel in the cockpit - “pure magic”!

I have a small collection of cars and motor cycles most of which I have restored myself. I’m never happier than when I’m tinkering in the garage in the small hours or pulling a clock apart on the kitchen table. Thankfully my lovely wife Janet, who died in 2002, shared my interests and was an immense support throughout my career. When our two children Tina and Stuart were old enough she successfully campaigned MGs and TVRs and took to flying helicopters rather than fixed-wing aircraft. Tina now lives in America with husband John and my grandchildren Chloe and Thomas, and Stuart lives locally with wife Michelle and grandson Joshua.

During my life I have been blessed with a prodigious amount of good luck, and whatever small successes I have achieved has been largely choreographed by the inspired people I worked for, and the events that impacted upon them. What’s more I’ve been able to do what I loved most in life, in planes and cars and things, at no cost to myself!

We are so fortunate in our Probus club in having a group of members with such diverse talents and interests, and the glimpses we get into their lives and exploits are always tantalisingly more interesting than our own.

- Neil Crabb

[Though in response to that last comment, Neil, I have to say that yours will be a hard act to follow! - pw]

The annual bowls meet-up with Aldridge Probus took place at the Conservative club on Tuesday 6th May. We had a few more bowlers this year though more are always welcome. The weather conditions were just perfect for an informal ‘friendly’ game or two.

It started off well for us with a couple of wins. Then slowly the tide turned with everyone becoming more intent on doing well for their own team. Out of the 22 - or so - bowlers, some proved to be really on form and determined not to let their side down. There were peaks and troughs of play during the afternoon but the visitors proved too strong for us and the match slowly slipped out of our grasp. To win, we were dependant on good results from the last two games, but it proved too much of a mountain to climb.

We do have a return match planned at the club, which we are all looking forward to in order to correct the imbalance. Everyone seemed to enjoy the relaxed environment of the day with many kind comments made by the visitors on how they had been received. The final score was 79 for us and 89 for the visitors.

- Tony Ferneyhough

'The Membership Page'— this is the spot where we invite members to write about their lives, their interests, activities or professions. This time it's the turn of Neil Crabb, seen here racing a Bugatti but having written this piece from the crew room at Boscombe Down during May Day weekend, before once more taking to the air! - pw



'WHEELS AND WINGS AND THINGS'

I was born and bred in Birmingham in 1935 to a father who was a brilliant aircraft design engineer and mathematician, and a mother who spoke three languages fluently. They were clearly very intelligent and my two older sisters were proving to be extremely bright but I turned out to be a grave disappointment, for the only things at which I excelled were sport and music. I majored in most of the school teams and became head chorister at Lichfield Cathedral.

Despairing at my reports my father did however recognise that I had a mechanical aptitude. Apparently aged ten I pulled an expensive chiming clock apart and got it working properly. At twelve a neighbour gave me a completely dismantled 1921 Triumph 500cc motorcycle, which I promptly rebuilt and afterwards could be seen cheerfully riding around Sutton on it with complete abandon. I was captivated by the thrill of speed and at fifteen lied my way into the Junior Speedway Team at Perry Barr Stadium (the Brummies). Under the tutelage of the legendary Tiger Hart and riding one of his bikes I found myself earning upwards of £40 a week! Unfortunately the budding star got his picture in the papers and I was ignominiously returned to school.

My father having wisely decided that I would never succeed academically, used his influence to arrange what would now be called work experience for me at Alvis Cars at Coventry. I loved it, and with a glowing report was entered for a full engineering and design apprenticeship at Rolls Royce. They put me through university and shaped my future, and I spent the majority of my working life there, hence my love of Alvis and Rolls Royce cars.

My National Service was extended due to the closing skirmishes of the Korean War. I was commissioned as a pilot in the RAF (later CRAF), flying both fighters and heavy bombers. Aviation and all aspects of motorsport were to dominate my life ever after.



Left & below: Who are these dopey creatures standing in the rain?

Bottom: Another grumpy old man!

Thursday 1st May— 'Kenilworth Castle'

Report by John Vickers, photographs by Rita Rooke

The much postponed Kenilworth long walk actually took place on Thursday 1 May. Inspired by Bob Badham's determination finally to tame the elements, eighteen hardy long-walkers set off into rain-swept Warwickshire countryside having surmounted the first major challenge of the day in negotiating Kenilworth's embarrassment of car parks. Once we'd found each other, the rest was simple - set off in the same direction and enjoy the rain.

Fuelled by Rita's sweets we made good progress and were soon making up lost time. Thanks to Bob's impeccable navigation, we took no wrong turnings, and his weather control deserves further mention because within half an hour the rain stopped and didn't return until almost the end. We even had moments of sunshine to compensate for the rare treat of getting soaked twice in one walk. There were no major incidents, but we ought to acknowledge Geoff's initiative in creating short cuts, and Rita's demonstration of how to walk on mud with extreme elegance.

The car park challenge returned when we had to switch to the Queen and Castle pay and display, which everyone managed eventually, and most even found the right pub first time. The meal was very good, and so was the service. We were located at a large set of tables in the loft, which baffled me at first, until I realised that someone might have tipped off the landlord about what to expect from the Probus Long Walks ensemble.

- John Vickers



Diary of events and activities to August 2014

Thursday 22nd May

Club meeting: 'Baginton Aerodrome & the Midland Air Museum'

Speaker: Mr Barrie James
Newsletter Report: Dale Lyons
Vote of Thanks: Neil Crabb

Kitchen Rota:

Ivor Wesley, Ray Clark,
Jim Bailey, Graham Jones,
Tony Ferneyhough,

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
'Three Dales around Hartington'
Long Walk led by Barry Gill

Thursday 12th June
Visit to Baginton Aerodrome
John Cheal, co-ordinator

Tuesday 17– Tuesday 24th June
Early Summer Break to Croatia
Organised by Brian Mallett

Thursday 26th June

Club meeting:
'Bringing Theatre to Africa'
Speaker: Ian Appleby
Newsletter Report: Brian Mallett
Vote of Thanks: David Roy

Kitchen Rota:
Dennis Rose, Ernest Williams,
Brian Harbourne,
Fred Nightingale, Brian Nicholas

Thursday 3rd July
Tour of the Cotswolds & Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway
Organised by John Cheal

Thursday 10th July

Long Walk led by Graham Jones

Friday 11th July

President's Supper
at Swinfen Hall
Harry Medcalf, co-ordinator

Thursday 17th July

Pub Amble
led by Fred Nightingale & Alfred Wallwork

Thursday 24th July

Club meeting:
'My Visit to Afghanistan'
Speaker: Mrs Erica Perkins
Newsletter Report: Tim Daly
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
Long Walk led by Brian Spencer

Thursday 21st August
Pub Amble (to be advised)

Thursday 28th August
Club meeting:
'A funny thing happened at the Registry Office'
Speaker: Mr John Yates

Friday 23rd May; 'Elvis Presley on Stage' at Symphony Hall

Organised by Harry Medcalf

In celebration of the 60th Anniversary of Rock & Roll and Elvis' first recording session we too can see 'ELVIS PRESLEY – ON STAGE'. Using the latest technology Elvis performs via state-of-the art video screens singing lead vocals backed by a live band, singers and an orchestra. Together, this multi-media creation puts the audience inside an Elvis Presley concert and creates the illusion that Elvis is on stage for one of his finest performances. The show will commence at 8.00p.m.

- Harry Medcalf

Thursday 29th May: Visit to the Black Country Living Museum

Organised by Mike Gospel

This is an open-air museum of rebuilt historic buildings close to Dudley Castle which occupies some 26 acres of former industrial land partly reclaimed from a former railway goods yard, disused lime kilns and coal pits. Our visit includes a talk in the schoolroom, a trip on the canal and down the coal-mine. Our visit starts at 10.00a.m., meet at car-park.

- Mike Gospel

Thursday 5th June; 'Three Dales around Hartington'

Long Walk led by Barry Gill

Centred on the Derbyshire village of Hartington this walk of a little over six miles passes through the limestone dales of Biggin, Wolfscote and Beresford, initially crossing some of the areas 'green lanes' on the moor top above Hartington. The terrain is fairly easy with paths through the dales and green lanes between fields, though the climb up onto the moor top from Hartington is a steady pull. Biggin Dale, which follows, is normally a dry valley and runs downhill for about a mile through a deeply-rutted rock-strewn area till it meets the River Dove. There are a few squeezer-type stiles. Meet at village to begin walk between 10.15-10.30a.m. Distance from Sutton area is around 50 miles, journey takes around 1¼ hours, depending on traffic.

Directions: A515 from Lichfield to Ashbourne, continuing on towards Buxton. Just beyond Newhaven (10 miles) turn left on B5054. Hartington is 2 miles west of the main road. Park by the duck pond or within the adjacent square.

Food and Drink: We are carrying packed lunches but there are cafes (Beresford Tea Rooms) and pubs in Hartington. The Youth Hostel passed on the walk has a beer garden open to the general public. There is a public toilet close to the square.

Contact on the day: 0121 353 9286 (before 9.00) afterwards 07946 228711. It would be very helpful if you could confirm by Monday 2nd if you are coming and if you will be going direct or wish to consider car-sharing

- Barry Gill

Thursday 12th June; Visit to Baginton Aerodrome

Organised by John Cheal

Our May speaker, Barrie James, will give us full details of this trip, but the general idea is to make our own way to the airport for a guided tour of the many aircraft on display. As John says, "There's a lot to see." Cost is £5.50 per head.

- John Cheal

Thursday 3rd July; The Cotswolds & Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway

Organised by John Cheal

We will travel by coach, probably starting from Aston Wood Golf Club at around 9.30a.m., for a tour of the Cotswolds, finishing at Bourton-on-the-Water where there are many eating places in this pretty village. We will then travel to Toddington to board a steam train for a round trip of 1½ hours before returning by coach to Sutton. Cost for the day will be £24.00 per person, and the board will be out at the next meeting.

- John Cheal