

Thursday 6th November,
Long Walk to
Worcestershire Beacon, or
‘Probus on top of the world!’
Organised by Mike Haynes,
Report by Jim Bailey



*“Hold onto your hat,
Mike, it’s a bit
blowey up here!”*

It was a bright cold day *[and the clocks were striking thirteen]* as Rod and I made our way to Malvern, stopping first at the Morrisons store for a hot drink where we met Mike and Tracy, our two guides for the day, who had the same idea! The main group of twelve members met at the North Quarry car park where the traditional ‘chocs’ were distributed.

We made our way up to the Sugar Loaf Col and then up to the Trig. point on the top of the Worcester Beacon. The wind was so strong up there that it was difficult to remain on your feet! Despite this the magnificent views from the top made the effort worthwhile. After a brief stop on the way down we made our way to The Nags Head for lunch, where Mike scored 10/10; the food was that good! A very good walk, more demanding than usual but well worth the effort. Well done Mike!

- Jim Bailey

And here’s another one I can recommend.....

I don’t know if anyone else saw the extracts from Tim Bell’s autobiography, which ran for a few days in the *Daily Mail* last month. As I’m sure you realise Tim Bell is a PR man who was one of the closest confidants of Margaret Thatcher all through her time as Leader of the Conservative Party, and some of the stories he had to tell were quite hilarious (I think my favourite is the one about the ‘tired & emotional’ Archbishop of Canterbury and his line-up of extremely dodgy bishops, none of whom seemed a good recommendation for Christianity).

As a result Eileen bought me the book* for my recent birthday, and I can honestly say it’s one of the best reads I’ve had for a long time. Tim Bell started from quite humble origins and worked his way up to a point where he seems to have met everyone, from Bill Clinton to the Sultan of Brunei. He is outspoken about modern political leaders, “It’s become a world of pygmies” and scathing about the way some of them perform. “Can you imagine Nelson Mandela or Winston Churchill feeling they needed to tell people that jammy dodgers were their favourite biscuits?”. There’s a serious side—he doesn’t pull any punches about the way he thinks the Left has undermined and taken over so many of our institutions – but I enjoyed it most for the hilarious stories he has to tell about the Great and the Good. I bet they absolutely hate him!

- pw

* RIGHT OR WRONG BY Tim Bell, Bloomsbury, 230 pages, £22.50

MAKING YOUR APOLOGIES. If you 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 Probus Club

(Founded 1998)

President: John Fellows

Newsletter

No. 192

November 2014

October Speaker:
**‘How to be an Advanced
Driver’ by Neil Atkins**

**Or, ‘MIRROR – SIGNAL –
ACCELERATE!’
Report by Mike Gospel**



Neil began with an account of the first recorded pedestrian fatality in Britain, in August 1896 at the Crystal Palace when a 44-year-old woman “froze with fear” at the sight of a car coming towards her at four miles per hour. The first occupant fatality happened on 23rd February 1899 when a wheel came off a car travelling at 25 mph; the driver and passenger were killed, and the coroner stated in his report that “this must never happen again”. Now there are some 2500 fatalities per year—and Britain’s roads are the safest in Europe!

After that the talk rather went downhill, with the theme, “What is advanced driving?” Neil explained that we should drive with a positive and courteous attitude, with the correct gear engaged. We were advised to formulate a driving plan, seeing what is there and then anticipating what might happen. (I bet you never thought of any of those things!)

Neil also spent some considerable time explaining “Personal Safety”. Drivers should use common sense, plan the journey, make sure the car is roadworthy, plan the route, tell people where they are going, carry a torch, wear a reflective jacket, consider locking the doors **AND** have an inflatable male in the passenger seat if a woman is travelling alone!

He ended the talk by explaining what services could go through a red light, together with advice on how to hold a steering wheel.

The customary vote of thanks was given by Bryan Nicholas, who thanked Neil for his presentation. However, Peter Prime summed-up the feeling of some members by remarking that the talk never really got out of first gear! And now it’s time for me to finish this report in order to blow up the inflatable male, as Jan is going shopping!

- Mike Gospel



THE POPPIES – A DAY TO REMEMBER

Visit to the Tower of London, Monday 3rd November

Report & picture by Peter Terleski

On a sunny morning with spirits high our Probus party of 16 departed for London in a luxury mini-bus, but warning signs started to appear when we discovered that the driver had never been to London before! Then, as we travelled along, clouds began forming in the southern skies and when we stopped on the motorway for a short comfort break the rain was beginning to fall.

Harry Medcalf raised our spirits when he stepped in to direct the driver with his A-Z and local knowledge of the London area. We had plenty of time to appreciate the sights of Whitechapel, Shoreditch and Holloway as we sat in an endless traffic jam. Our goal destination – The Tower of London – was a little nearer when suddenly the mini-bus pulled up in an anonymous London street and we were informed by the driver that we would have to wait 45 minutes before continuing our journey in order to comply with his tachograph!

We all piled off the bus on to the pavement in the pouring rain to assess the distance to our goal, but after advice from passers-by it was decided unanimously that it was too far to walk, so we joined the driver back on the bus for his break; all in a somewhat dampened condition. Break over, Harry again came to the fore and guided the driver onward to our destination.

However, the spirits of the group were lifted and rewarded with an absolutely breathtaking sight – an endless flow of scarlet poppies – memorable and very moving.

All too soon we were back on the bus, heading homeward. Back at Harry's house the piece-de-resistance came when the driver informed us that in order to comply with his tachograph he would have to head straight back to his depot, leaving us all stranded! But Harry put on his taxi hat, and along with our son James, all were conveyed safely home.

It was a great experience unfortunately marred by the driver and his blasted tachograph, but Harry deserves particular praise for saving the day and he should be mentioned in despatches. [see Gill Wallwork's poem, opposite]

- Peter Terle-

"Cheers!", wish you could join us in the comfort of our hotel. The Sea Marge (below) was a haunt of Winston Churchill and it was from here that he made the telephone call to mobilise the Fleet at the outbreak of the first World War.



Far right; Jim and Sylvia look pleased that their arrangements have worked so well.

Above; Where is our President? I think we should be told!

Right; Brave souls venture out into the Norfolk gales to see the beach at Overstrand, just a few miles down the coast from Cromer.





Probus 'Away Weekend' at Thursford, 14-16 November Report by David Rooke, Pictures from Rita

This was a brilliant weekend, superbly organised with an excellent hotel, good food, a spectacular show, all glued together with our usual Probus friendship.

We knew Christmas was coming when, like the Magi, we travelled far to the East, settling on a royal house called Sandringham for rest and recuperation. We quickly learned that posh places don't sell chips, they provide wedges. That day Charles was celebrating his 66th birthday but Selby told them he couldn't go to the bash at the big house as he had a fish & chip supper date with Probus at Overstrand.

The Sea Marge Hotel was a delightful throwback to a more formal era but tastefully updated to meet present needs. The plumbing system led to a number of stories too sensitive to detail in a family newsletter. Bar area was well used and the minstrel gallery above gave several ladies the opportunity to practise the Can-Can. Service was very attentive, led by one young lady of authority who just could have been the daughter-in-law who chose your future nursing home!

Based in an old farm shed, the Thursford Show started as a one-off performance to 530 people in 1977. This year 130,000 people will see the "Christmas Spectacular" on a stage twice as wide as the London Palladium! We initially visited Fantasy Land, an amazing Grotto specifically designed for pensioners who are young at heart. Thereafter we went straight into the wonderfully decorated auditorium for the performance.

The opening sequence was an explosion of over 100 singers, dancers and musicians in a show comprised some 30 events over three hours. Personal favourites were a Cat Duet, a tight-rope artiste who made my eyes water, a Penguin sequence that looked like an advert for John Lewis, an organist who reminded me of Fred Astaire dancing, a 'Norfolk' comedian, who particularly amused Sylvia, and a Spanish Dance, all backed by a very versatile orchestra. Simply brilliant!

In the evening President John thanked Jim Bailey for his organisation of the weekend which had taken nearly two years of planning and attention to detail. Thank you, Jim, from all of us, and onward to the next merry excursion!

- David Rooke



Dinner at The Boathouse, Thursday 30th October Report by Peter Weston

By chance the next morning I opened David Lodge's latest novel, *DEAF SENTENCE*, and on the very first page read about the 'Lombard Reflex', which apparently comes into play when speakers unconsciously increase their vocal efforts in a noisy environment.

Well, I can confirm that old Etienne Lombard was on to something because as the night wore on the volume of female voices increased and those of us with slightly impaired hearing (= the men) were reduced to stunned silence. I could just about hear the occasional word from Fred D., right across the table, from which I concluded that he was even more of a workaholic than I'd realised, and when I turned to Pat (next to me) I discovered she was more of the same.

None of my spies on the other tables had anything to report (all men, and probably as left-behind by the conversation as I was), although I heard the odd phrase about "hurricane in Bermuda"... "blew the roof off"... from the President's table, and someone slipped me a very interesting picture of John taking emergency precautions to protect his hair and trousers.

The Boathouse is a nice little restaurant and the young waiters were very obliging but our sheer numbers must have caused some logistical problems, not least in our having no room to congregate before being seated. When it came to food, Table 1 was done and dusted before Table 4 had seen their starters, and while the meals were hot and generous they didn't taste quite as good as they looked; dare I suspect that they might have been brought in from outside?

And it was *hot*, hotter than Bermuda before the storm, and while taking a breath of air on the patio I was surprised by the sight of the elderly, very dead gentleman in the doorway; a bit like leaving a crashed airliner at the end of the runway, I thought! Perhaps he was left over from Halloween?

I ended by asking Selby if he'd seen that stupid piece in *The Guardian* about the London poppies, to which he sniffed, "Don't mention that paper". I can only concur. [pw]



The Tower of London

I was lucky to be included
To the visit to London Town
The Mercedes coach was luxury
And Jasindra drove us down.

The Probus people charming.
Though the skies were overcast,
By careful navigating
We reached the Tower at last.

The tower in all its glory
The moat a stream of red.
A World War One Memorial
To the wounded and the dead.

Each poppy was a soldier
Who fought and feared and died.
Each poppy was a family
That loved and mourned and cried.

It was a humbling moment
As I stood there in the rain.
The heavens weeping softly
Raindrops, tears of pain.

My thanks to the Probus people
Who accompanied me all the way
And made the trip to London
Such a really memorable day.

- Gillian Whittaker

Diary of events and activities to April 2015

Thursday 27th November Club Meeting

'A Scientist turns to Crime'
Speaker; Mr Rodger Ide
Newsletter Report: John Carrington
Vote of Thanks: David Roy
Kitchen Rota: Dale Lyons
Paul Beaumont, Brian Mallett,
Peter Prime, Peter Weston,

Friday 5th December
Christmas Lunch at Moor Hall
Organised by David Rooke

Thursday 11th December
Long Walk led by Rod Crowley

Thursday 8th January AND
Wednesday 14th January
Lunch at B'ham College of Food
Organised by Brian Mallett

Thursday 15th January
Long Walk led by John Vickers

Thursday 22nd January Club Meeting

'Six Thousand Years of Clay'
Speaker; Mr J. Christophers
Newsletter Report: Tim Daly
Vote of Thanks: Mike Lock
Kitchen Rota:
Barry Gill, David Roy, Ivor Wesley,
Ernest Williams, Brian Nicholas

Thursday 5th February
Long Walk led by Bob Badham

Thursday 19th February
'Bucks Fizz' walk
Hosted by Allan & Jackie Powers

Friday 27th February
Skittles Evening at
Lea Marston Leisure Centre
Organised by Jim Bailey & Mike Gospel

Thursday 26th February Club Meeting

'An Inspector Calls'
Speaker: Mr David Howe
Newsletter Report: Terry Booth
Vote of Thanks: Roger Phillips
Kitchen Rota: Brian Senior,
Brian Harbourn, Brian Spencer
Fred Nightingale, John Buckland

Thursday 5th March
Long Walk led by Mike Haynes

Thursday 12th March
Visit to B'ham Assay Office
Organised by Bob Badham

Saturday 14th March
Spring Dining Event
at Walmley Golf Club
Organised by Harry Medcalf

Thursday 19th March
Pub Amble led by Brian Spencer

Thursday 26th March Club Meeting

'The Role of the Lord Lieutenant'
Speaker: Paul Sabapathy, Lord
Lieutenant of the West Midlands
Newsletter Report: Rod Crowley
Vote of Thanks: Peter Gray
Kitchen Rota:
Selby Betts; Neil Crabb; Bob Badham;
Mike Haynes; Keith Keeley

Monday 13th April
Long Walk led by John Carrington

*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—
and you may then be committed to
pay for meals ordered.*

Friday 5th December, Christmas Lunch at Moor Hall

The board will be out again at the November meeting for you to select your lunch menu, cost £33.25. Arrive at 12.00noon, for 12.45pm.
- David Rooke

Thursday 11th December, Long Walk – Alton, Stoke-on-Trent

We end the year with a walk in the Churnet Valley and the countryside above Oakamoor, before returning to the Ramblers' Retreat for a pre-booked lunch. Numbers are restricted; if you have not already confirmed your place, please contact me.
-Rod Crowley

Thursday 8th January AND Wednesday 14th January, Lunch at Birmingham College of Food

Partly because of the increased size of the club and the popularity of this event, the College has had to limit the numbers that can be served at one seating. We are therefore offering two dates and the second will be reserved if the first occasion is not available.
- Brian Mallett

Thursday 15th January, Long Walk—Barr Beacon

Meet at the first car park on Beacon Road at 9.45 am. for a 10.00 am. start. The walk is local and circular from Barr Beacon via Merriion's Wood, the Rushall Canal and Beacon Way. Distance is 6½-7 miles, relatively flat with one and a bit stiles, and good paths for the most part. A couple of short stretches could be muddy if we have a lot of rain beforehand.

Directions; Take B4151 (Foley Road West) towards Walsall, across the Chester Road and across the roundabout by the Foley Arms to the traffic lights at the top of Beacon Hill. Turn left along Beacon Road, then take first left turn into the first Barr Beacon car park. The drive winds up the hill and the car park is before the reservoir. *[A well-known courting spot but quiet at this time of day! - pw]* The walk should take 3-3½ hours and I will aim to book tables at Farmer John's, Aldridge Road. Please advise ASAP if you intend to join us.
- John Vickers

Thursday 5th February, Long Walk—Leamington Spa

Subject to the weather, this is a 7-mile circular walk from Cubbington via Offchurch. It will be over open fields (may be muddy), part of the Comyn Golf Course, and follows a section of the Millennium Way. Eight stiles (1 dog-unfriendly) and the walk will take approx 3½ hours.

Start from outside the Kings Head Pub, Church Hill, Cubbington (CV32 7JY), travel-time approx. one hour. There is no car park so parking is opposite the church in Church Hill. Meet at 9.45am., start 10.00am. Refreshments will be taken at the pub hopefully, I have yet to speak to them. The pub does not open until 12 noon so no toilet facilities will be available. Failing availability of this pub then my second choice is the Stag in Offchurch; if so then the walk will commence and terminate at the Stag. I will confirm to walkers in due course.
- Bob Badham

Thursday 19th February— 'Bucks Fizz' Walk

Meet at the home of Jackie & Allan Powers, 33 Goldieslie Road, B73 5PE at 10.00am. for happy chatter and our 17th 'Bucks Fizz' walk in Sutton Park before lunch at a venue to be advised. The board will be out at the January meeting.
- Brian Spencer

Christmas Greetings from our members



As in previous years, many members prefer to make charitable donations rather than exchanging cards. Listed below are members who are doing this, but who nonetheless wish to send their greetings to Probus friends. The 'postal service' will operate as usual to distribute cards at the Christmas Lunch.

Paul Beaumont, Terry Booth, Rod Crowley, Tim Daly, Tony Ferneyhough, Peter Gray, Mike Lock, Barry Parsonage, Allan Powers, Dennis Rose, David Roy, Ian Scholes, Geoff Silvester, Mike Taylor, Peter Weston, Roy Willson. Apologies if I've missed anyone!
- pw