

'BRING ME SUNSHINE....'

Pub Amble, Thursday 19th September, Report by Tony Ferneyhough



We gathered at the Dog at Whittington at the appointed time. Everyone was, as normal, in good humour. But instead of the eternal Thursday morning sun we were greeted by a fine drizzle. Was Roy there? Had we picked the wrong day? Was there something that we had not been told? We were reassured that the rain was passing over and the (pre-booked) sun would accompany us as usual. But even the landlady was not that optimistic and said she would be waiting with hot towels and a cuppa when we returned! Roy's communication system to the gods in the heavens had developed a flat battery and our pleas went unheard.

Undaunted but well prepared the Probus broly parade trundled off in good spirits through the very pleasant village and onto the main part of the walk along the canal towpath and through the fields. Our expectations of the weather diminished as the rain lashed down but were we down-hearted? Certainly not!! The chat was wide-ranging as usual but we did not feel the need to dally for too long. We walked through the remnants of the strawberry fields where some farm hands were braving the weather, on past large poly tunnels where a variety of vegetables were growing, and then back to the pub.

We were back a little too early but the landlady took pity on us and allowed us to drip on her flagged floors. Eventually the non-walkers arrived, swelling the throng to a full room. The meal itself was very well presented and tasty – the staff were very efficient. Rod was dubious about giving the vote of thanks but carried it off with great humour. Our thanks go to Roy and Mary. As we left the pub the sun shone forth (just like a good joke – it's all about timing!) and we all forgave you!

- Tony Ferneyhough

MAKING YOUR APOLOGIES

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

If you are unable to carry out your duties on the Kitchen Rota please try and 'swap' with someone from the following month, and for the time being advise **Mike Terry** of the change.

If you are unable to carry out the Vote of Thanks or write the Newsletter Report please get in touch with me, **Peter Weston**, **well before** that General Meeting. I'll welcome your comments on any item in the Newsletter—but please let me have it early rather than late!

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Sutton Park Probus Club

(Founded 1998)

President: Rod Crowley

Newsletter

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AN HISTORIC WEEKEND—the 'Downton Abbey' excursion

Report by Dennis Rose

On Saturday 7th September 48 members and partners set off in surprisingly pleasant sunshine to visit our first port of call, Laycock Abbey and Village near Chippenham in Wiltshire. Both Abbey and Village are owned by the National Trust having been bequeathed by the previous owners, the Talbot family, in the 1940's.

The place is a curious mixture of historic house, residential and commercial activities but nonetheless a fascinating and unique experience. The Abbey, originally a nunnery, was sold by Henry the Eighth to the family who converted it to a home and it remains much as it was until today. An important claim to fame is the early development of photographic processes there by William Fox Talbot in the late 1800's, and an impressive Museum of Photography has been created to record his pioneering achievements.

The Village is a charming relic of "Olde England" and has been much used as a location for period television dramas, although it did have several hostleries where cream teas and the like were partaken. For those wishing to visit and stay there are several B&B's offering accommodation in historic surroundings.



Our hotel for the night beckoned and after feeding and resting, the next day we visited Highclere Castle near Newbury, the inspiration for TV's "Downton Abbey", although it is neither a castle nor abbey but an imposing grand country house!

Fortunately the Downton connection was not overdone and there was much of interest including an Egyptian exhibition celebrating the famous discoveries of Howard Carter and the Earl of Carnarvon, a forefather of the present Earl and Countess. Despite its grandeur, the castle felt lived-in and is still used frequently by the family for entertaining and for weddings, etc. (Cont'd)

The gardens, although not too large, were very pleasant even though it is near the end of summer and much of the borders were “going over”.

After another pleasant overnight stay at the Reading Moat House hotel we departed on a wet and soggy morning to Hampton Court Palace. It is impossible to describe the palace in a few words, sufficient to say that it is a most fascinating and humbling experience to see the way that the Tudor and Baroque Royalty created these amazing buildings and gardens full of symbolism and displays of wealth and power. It was fortunate that much to see was indoors and a pity that the rainy weather precluded serious exploration of the gardens. The writer and Herself are resolved to visit again.

The seating plans for our two enjoyable evening meals were a great success, allowing both established and newer members and partners a chance to meet in the usual convivial atmosphere of Probus gatherings.

Our grateful thanks to Jim (and Sylvia!) for the hard work and dedication resulting in an excellent weekend break that will long be remembered by all as a brief but interesting glimpse into various aspects of our past times.

- Dennis Rose

Right; Vice-President John and Lady Marlene test their thrones for comfort at Hampton Court Palace.

Below; Our group poses amid the Olde Worlde charm of Laycock Village. Photos by Rita.



Stomachs were by now starting to grumble so we made a picnic stop at Harborne Village Green in sight of ‘Acorn Antiques’ (yes, really!). Neither Victoria Wood nor Julie Walters were serving in the shop so after a pleasant interlude our adventurers set off in the direction of Harborne High Street.

After a short walk along roads we took a short stairway onto the bank of the Birmingham-Worcester canal and headed back towards Birmingham City Centre. Passing the University and bemoaning the loss of the Davenport’s ‘beer at home’ brewery in Bath Row we very quickly reached the back of the Mailbox but unfortunately Shafali Oza had finished her weather forecast so we trudged on, getting back to the starting point shortly afterwards.



John points out the sights while crossing the Rubicon (in Brindley Place). Photo by Mike Lock

Pit-stop in the fields of Harborne—photo by Dennis Rose



Everybody agreed the weather could not have been better and the company and fellowship was, as usual, second to none. Similarly, everybody was amazed at how much heritage and culture they experienced in such a short time and so close to the City Centre – perhaps we should make another bid for the City of Culture?

We strolled back to New Street railway station, passing the newly opened Central Library. It’s pretty spectacular, but will probably look even better when the scaffolding is removed! Thanks Graham for arranging a most interesting and intriguing urban walk in what is arguably the best city in the UK.

- John Carrington

'AN URBAN ADVENTURE'

A walk around the byways of old Birmingham,
Thursday 5th September

Arranged by Graham Jones, narrated by John Carrington.

Despite Birmingham losing its bid to become UK City of Culture, Probus decided to undertake an urban adventure encompassing the culture of inner-city Birmingham and its redundant railways and canal systems, in and around Ladywood and Harborne. Accordingly a group of 20 members and partners met at the Symphony Hall on a bright September morn and it was very quickly established that only one of us had not been eligible for free train transport to the start. Ah, the joys of retirement!

Our merry band left the Symphony Hall, walking along the Birmingham to Wolverhampton Canal; "please mind the roundabout," until we reached the bridge under Ladywood Middleway. It was at this point that Graham and John realised they had forgotten to bring their fluorescent tabards, but undeterred, and without a 'Stop, Children' sign in sight we managed to negotiate this busy thoroughfare to the shout of 'keep off th'oss road' from passing motorists.

Soon the group arrived at a magnificent golden Buddhist Temple, hidden away in a nondescript side street near Icknield Port Road (bet you didn't know it was there!). Whilst taking in the wonder of the Temple, someone pointed out the two towers that apparently inspired J R Tolkien's description of the 'two towers' in his Lord of the Rings trilogy.

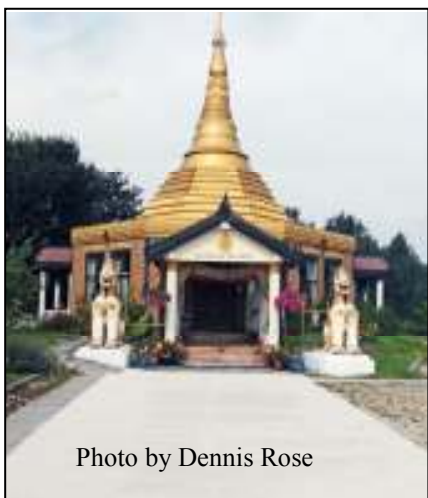


Photo by Dennis Rose

One was constructed by Birmingham Waterworks, the other is 'Perrott's Folly'. It is difficult to imagine that in 1758 when John Perrott built his tower that his land stretched all the way to the Clent Hills and was a well-stocked deer park. It is said that he built the 96-foot folly to watch over his wife's grave, though why he buried her fifteen miles away remains a mystery!

We then moved on to see the Edgbaston Reservoir, no one daring to admit that they used to frequent 'grab a granny' night at the Tower ballroom. Despite SPPC members being renowned for always being early at events unfortunately on this occasion we were 140 years too late to witness Charles Blondin complete a tightrope walk across the 58 acre, 40-foot deep reservoir.



PW with photograph of Union cavalry officer and lady who look suspiciously like a couple seen at a recent garden party!

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, PRESENTED BY PETER WESTON

Report by Barry Parsonage

How fortunate we are as a club to have Peter Weston to give us a lecture at the very last moment [**blush**] when the scheduled speaker was unable to attend due to illness. His subject was Gettysburg—the biggest battle ever fought in the Western Hemisphere, from the 1st to the 4th July 1863, one hundred and fifty years ago this summer.

It was fought in and around the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, between Union and Confederate forces during the American Civil War and Peter very eloquently explained the tactics employed by both armies. The confederate General Robert E Lee concentrated his army around Gettysburg upon the approach of Union General George G Meade's forces and on the first day drove Union defenders back through Gettysburg to Cemetery Hill.

The next day Lee struck the flanks of the Union Line, resulting in severe fighting at Devil's Den, Little Round Top, the Wheatfield, Peach Orchard, Culp's Hill and East Cemetery Hill. The southerners gained ground but failed to dislodge the Union host. On the morning of the third day fighting raged at Culp's Hill, with the Union regaining its lost ground. That afternoon, after a massive artillery bombardment, Lee attacked the Union centre on Cemetery Ridge with 12,000 men in what is known as Pickett's Charge, and Peter showed us a section of film in which this was re-enacted. It was repulsed with heavy losses, and Lee's second invasion of the North had failed. As many as 51,000 soldiers from both armies were either killed, wounded, or were missing in this three-day battle.

I am sure the members will want to join me in thanking Peter, as he only had two hours notice and had not previously given this talk for two years.

- Barry Parsonage

Diary of events and activities to February 2014

Thursday 26th September

‘Born to Rule’ - Diane Mannering
Vote of Thanks: Mike Gospel
Newsletter Report: Bryan Nicholas

Kitchen Rota: Fred Nightingale
 Barry Gill, Denis Perkins, Neil Crabb,
 David Rooke,

Thursday 3rd October
Long Walk led by Barry Gill

Thursday 10th October
Short Walk & pub lunch
 Led by Brian Spencer & John Fellows

Thursday 24th October

‘Mountain Rescue in the UK’
 - Mr Vince Williams
Vote of Thanks: Geoff Silvester
Newsletter Report: David Wallis

Kitchen Rota: Tony Ferneyhough,
 Ray Clark, Alf Dineen,
 Brian Spencer, Ernest Williams

Thursday 24th October
ENCORE! - 80 years of musical theatre,
7.30pm, Sutton Town Hall
 Brian Mallet, co-ordinator

Thursday 31st October
Chinese Feast at the Lee Garden,
Sutton Coldfield,
 Harry Medcalf, co-ordinator

Thursday 7th November
Long Walk led by David Rooke

Thursday 14th November
Visit to Chatsworth &
Christmas Market
 Mike Gospel, co-ordinator

Thursday 21st November
Short Walk (to be advised)

Thursday 28th November

‘Fairground Tales’ - Mr Ned Williams
Vote of Thanks: Ken Shaw
Newsletter Report: Alfred Wallwork

Kitchen Rota:
 Jim Bailey, John Buckland,
 Roy Galloway, Brian Senior,
 Ivor Wesley

Monday 2nd December
Long Walk led by Dennis Rose

Friday 6th December
Christmas Lunch at Moor Hall
 Harry Medcalf, co-ordinator

NO GENERAL MEETING IN
DECEMBER

Thursday 9th January 2014
Long Walk (to be advised)

Thursday 16th January
Lunch at Birmingham College of Food,
Summer Row, City Centre
 Harry Medcalf, co-ordinator

Thursday 23rd January

‘How I Became a Vicar’ -
The Reverend B. Whitmore
St Bartholomew’s Vicarage,
Wolverhampton
Vote of Thanks: Jim Bailey
Newsletter Report: Philip Troman

Kitchen Rota: Selby Betts,
 John Booth, Terry Booth,
 Alfred Wallwork, Roy Willson

Thursday 6th February
Long Walk (to be advised)

Thursday 13th February
Visit to Avery Museum & Titanic
Exhibition

Thursday 3rd October— Derby Dales (Osmaston Shirley and Wyaston)

Long Walk led by Barry Gill

Starting from the village hall car park in Osmaston, a village 2½ miles south of Ashbourne, the walk crosses the parkland of Osmaston Manor. Roughly 6-7 miles in length it uses a mix of quiet lanes, lakeside walks and open fields in a rolling, undulating landscape. There are one or two steady climbs, the occasional muddy area and around a dozen stiles – none of which are tricky. **Meet at Roy’s** to leave at 9.15 a.m. Journey time depending on traffic is 1 hour. Or meet at village car park to begin walk between 10.30 - 10.45. Distance from Streetly is 36 miles.

Directions: Take A515 from Lichfield to Ashbourne. Approximately 5 miles north of Sudbury look out for large road sign pointing straightforward to Ashbourne and Clifton and left (B.5033) to Roston, Norbury and Ellaston. **No more than 500 yards beyond the sign turn right to Yeaveley (sign not very clear).** Cross airfield and proceed for 1½ miles to T-junction. Turn left towards Wyaston and Edlaston. (At time of writing the signpost had been knocked down!) Keeping on this road pass through Wyaston and the Shire Horse Inn to reach Osmaston. Bear left at pond, go past Shoulder of Mutton pub. The village hall car park is on the left before the church.

Food and Drink: We are carrying packed lunches but we shall stop for lunch by The Saracen’s Head in Shirley for those who want a pint.

Thursday 10th October — Exploring Sandwell Valley

Pub amble led by Brian Spencer

The walk is from the Malt Shovel in Newton Road Great Barr, which is about ½ m beyond the Scott Arms Cross Roads, heading towards West Bromwich after coming from Sutton along Queslett Road. Assemble at the pub car-park by 10.15 for 10.30 for a short (1¼m) walk around part of Sandwell Valley, including the reservoir which is a RSPB site. There are no stiles, and the walk is relatively flat. We also hope to visit the cottage next door to the pub which was previously inhabited by Bishop Asbury, founder of the Methodist Church in America, providing we can organise this with the Sandwell Council. The cost of the meal is good value at under £5 for a carvery, and the cottage visit will cost £3 for those who would like to do it.

Thursday 17th April 2014— Visit to the Garrick Theatre

‘The Mousetrap’ is famous around the world for being the longest running show of any kind in the history of British theatre. To celebrate 60 years on stage it’s now on tour for the first time, with a star cast, and will be coming to the Lichfield Garrick Theatre in April. We have arranged a special discounted price for our party at £23.50 per person, and bookings will need to be made at the September & October meetings.

- **Harry Medcalf**

Proposed visit to The State Rooms & Garden Highlights Tour, Buckingham Palace 14th or 21st August 2014, £40

The easy part of this booking has been completed in that a coach has been reserved for either of the above dates. The tickets for entry are available from November and at that time I will be informed by the Royal Collection of the date available. Due to demand, I need the two-date flexibility to hopefully ensure the purchase of our tickets. The board will be out at September and October meetings.

- **Brian Mallett**