



**NEWENT &  
DISTRICT  
PROBUS CLUB**

Inaugurated 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1977

**MONTHLY  
NEWSLETTER**

**June 2020**

**June Diary**

*June is almost but not quite cancelled*

**Chairman's Zoom Lecture:**

***"Debt in the time of Coronavirus: are we all doomed ?"***



**Virtual Probus Meeting  
TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2020 @ 10.30**



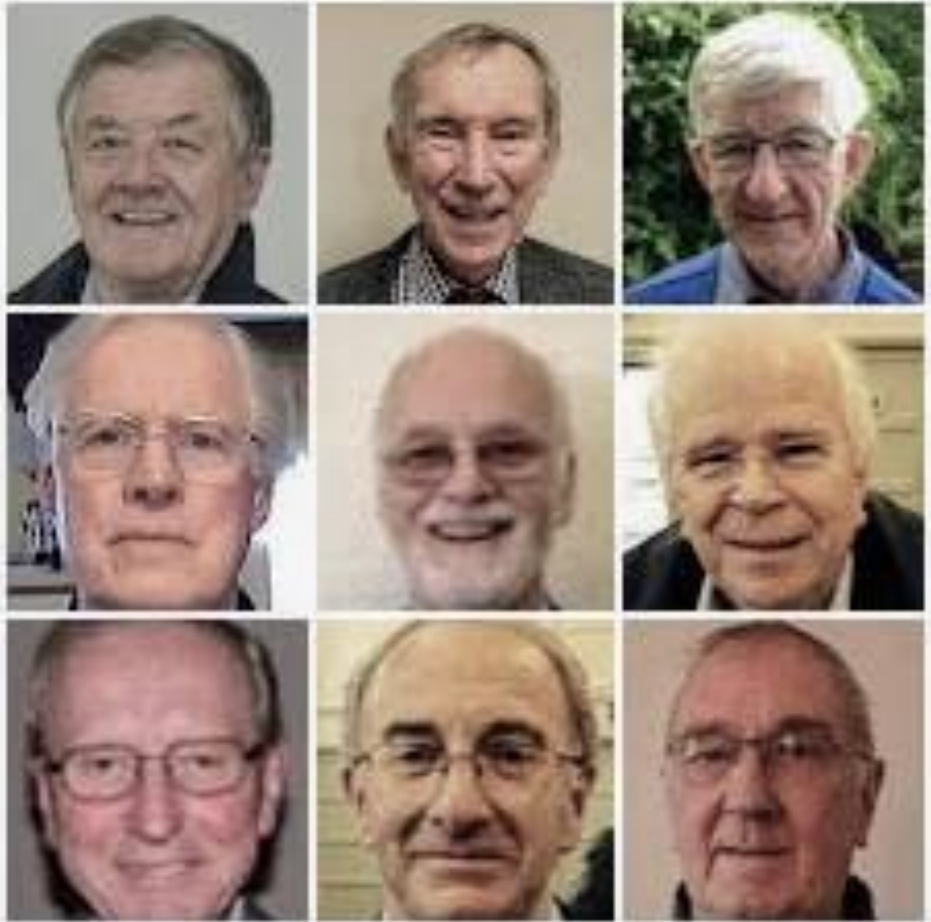
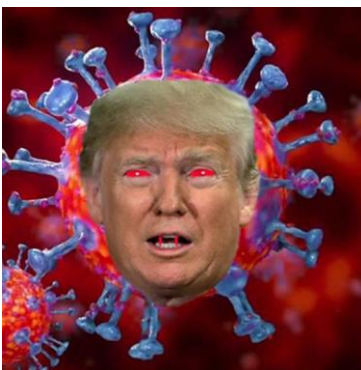
We are trialling a virtual Probus meeting using Zoom video conferencing facility. There will be a short business meeting to let you know what the committee has been doing during the lockdown. Our chairman Mike Warburton will then give a short presentation.

You will be sent a link, which you just click on and you then may enter the meeting. It is hoped to contact as many members as we can prior to the meeting to ensure we may all connect. We look forward to meeting up.

**Quote of the  
month:**

***"We are still  
playing cat and  
mouse with this  
virus, and make  
no mistake – we  
are the mice."***

***(Andrew Marr)***



*The current committee (left to right, top to bottom):*

*Fraser.....Andrew.....David..... Tony.....Mike.....John.....Jim  
.....John.....Roger*

*(If these essential workers look a bit ill here, blame the photography not the virus)*

## **From the Chairman**

Fraser suggested that as the incoming chairman of your club I might put together a bit about my background and interests.

Jan and I have lived in Taynton for 32 years with at various times four dogs, two horses and six sheep. We met in London when Jan was working in Harley street for a doctor who specialised in diseases of the rich. We subsequently lived in Manchester and Northampton before coming to Gloucestershire.

I took a degree in electronic and electrical engineering and on graduation I worked for CEC computers in Borehamwood. My claim to fame (sort of) is that I commissioned the first prototype of the forerunner of the computer on which the first commercial email was sent by the Queen from Malvern in 1976. Richard Crisp tells me that he even purchased some of these computers !

I then changed tack and have spent most of my professional life as an accountant, starting off in audit and then moving into tax when I discovered that this is what clients really wanted to talk about. It followed that most of my time has been spent helping successful entrepreneurs develop their businesses while avoiding the traps set along the way by the Inland Revenue. In the process I have acted for some very wealthy people. They tend to worry about tax bills, which I found came in useful. Most of them tried hard to avoid being featured in the Sunday Times Rich List as being an invitation to burglars and nosy journalists.

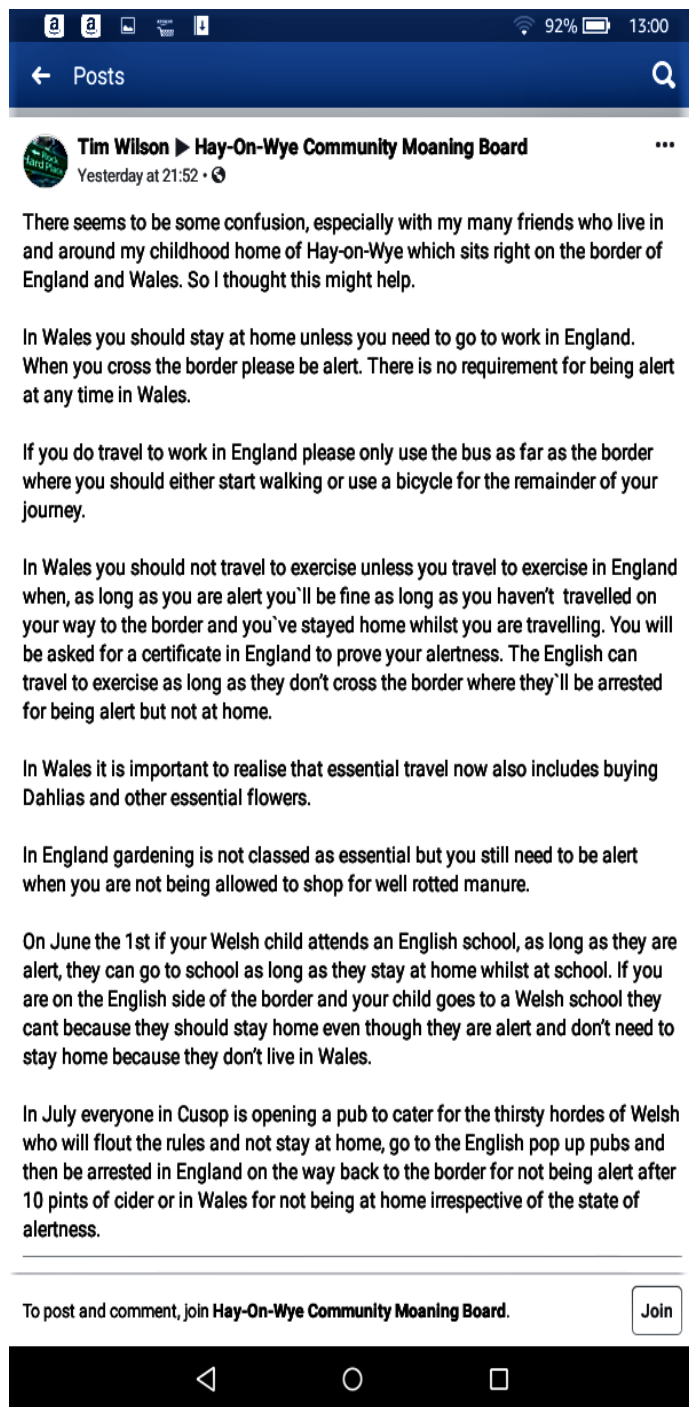
Apart from looking after clients I helped our inhouse legal department defend the firm in legal actions (yes even accountants get sued). Through this I met many litigation lawyers and ended up acting for them as an expert witness in various actions in the High Court. This was usually great fun but also challenging when facing a cross examination by an experienced barrister determined to undermine your credibility.

I also became the firm's tax spokesman for the media which involved helping journalists with their tax stories but developed into helping with their other investigations into the rich and famous. For over 20 years I was on the BBC radio 4 Money Box panel answering questions in live phone ins, which was particularly good fun on days following the budget.

In retirement I have maintained my contacts with journalists and still write a tax tips column twice a month for the online version of the Daily Telegraph.

This is only available for those who pay a subscription so you will probably not have seen it.

*Mike Warburton*



The screenshot shows a Facebook post from the 'Hay-On-Wye Community Moaning Board'. The post is by Tim Wilson, dated 'Yesterday at 21:52'. The text of the post discusses travel between England and Wales, specifically regarding border crossings, alertness, and essential travel. It includes several paragraphs of text, some starting with 'In Wales you should...' and 'In England...'. At the bottom of the post, there is a 'Join' button and a prompt to 'To post and comment, join Hay-On-Wye Community Moaning Board.'

## **Newsletter Note**

The committee has decided to put the Newsletter onto Facebook, on the grounds that it helps to raise the Club's profile in the digital age. Contributors wishing to remain anonymous online should inform the Editor when submitting items for inclusion, and Ed will be extra careful in general when using names, etc. He normally avoids printing private email addresses etc anyway. Please contact him or Ray if you have any concerns.

## The Sweating Sickness



*Euricius Cordus (1486-1535 drawing of the Sweating sickness, Strassbourg: 1529.*

Epidemics are not new. One such, the English Sweating Sickness, so called because it appeared at first in London in 1485, immediately killed 15,000 people before infecting much of Europe. Sweating Sickness was a viral infection, much like Covid-19 today. But whereas we now have an international army of scientists making sense of Coronavirus, no such help was available to people living during the outbreaks in 1507, 1517, 1528 and lastly in 1551.

Nobody knew how to prevent it, its cause was simply not known, let alone understood. If fatal, death was swift, within hours. Survivors spoke of having a premonition before the onset of the disease. The sufferer at first had a tremble, then a fever, headache and exhaustion. Stomach pains, aches in the back, shoulders, arms and legs, cardiac palpitations and a raging thirst were also symptoms.

Nobody knew how to treat it. Putting as much distance as possible between the infected and anyone else was as much as anyone could do. In hope, victims were wrapped in as many clothes as possible believing that this would make them sweat the disease out of their bodies.

Sweating Sickness was not 100% fatal. Nor was this a disease of poverty. Tudor chronicler Edward Hall wrote about the devastating effect it had on Henry VIII's court. Those infected included Anne Boleyn, her brother and father, and Cardinal Wolsey - all of whom survived. Henry Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk was struck down, his brother dying only a few hours later. The wife and children of Thomas Cromwell died in a matter of hours, as described by Hilary Mantel in *Wolf Hall*. Many wealthy students in Oxford and Cambridge succumbed. Unusually it did not affect the young and old as much as the rest of the population, and it was most commonly found in rural areas.

So why did the rich succumb? Historians think that wealthy households had food supplies which attracted the rodents, the droppings of which carried the disease.

But compared to the mortality of the Black Death, the Sweating Sickness was far less serious. The English population halved in the 4<sup>th</sup> century due to the Black Death from about 5m to 2.5m. In spite of the Sweating Sickness and many other fatal diseases, the 15<sup>th</sup>. and 16<sup>th</sup>. century population increased to nearly double, about 2.5m to 4.4m

Sweating sickness had disappeared by late Elizabethan times. Its reign of terror barely lasted a century. Why did it disappear so suddenly? Maybe it mutated to a milder form, maybe the rodent carriers were more heavily infected, died and ceased infecting humans. Maybe the change in the climate to cooler weather helped to reduce the number of rodent carriers? Modern day Virologists James Carlson and Peter Hammond suggest the 'Sweat' remains a medical mystery. The range of clinical and epidemiological features that characterized Sweating Sickness set it apart from other epidemic diseases of the Middle Ages such as the bubonic plague, typhus, and malaria. Suggestions have been made over the years that it was influenza, scarlet fever, anthrax, typhus or respiratory virus. Then in 1993, an outbreak of a remarkably similar disease to Sweating Sickness occurred among the Navajo people in New Mexico. Not only were symptoms similar, but mouse droppings were considered to be a likely cause of the disease— just as had been the case in 16<sup>th</sup> century England. The study of History teaches us many lessons. It also encourages us to ask many questions.

*Fiona Morison*

*Fiona, a frequent speaker at Probus and LDHS, contributed the above article to the Ross Gazette and has kindly granted permission for it to be reproduced here. The Linton and District History Society hopes to welcome new members to its autumn programme if restrictions are lifted.*

## Special Offer: Probus Plague Masks



**!!!Guaranteed!!!**

**to clear the area of bothersome kids  
within a 100 metre radius AND  
cause a sensation in Sainsbury's**

## John Weeden – Vice Chair

I gained my law degree at Bristol University in 1970 and whilst there learned to fly with the University Air Squadron - from Filton, whilst the Concorde was being developed directly below us. Having failed to fall out of the sky on top of it, I qualified as a Solicitor in 1973 and initially worked in Brighton on criminal cases, before responding to an advert for the Royal Air Force (RAF) Legal Branch. I joined as a Flight Lieutenant in 1974 and left 28 years later as Director of Legal Services (RAF), having attained the rank of Air Vice-Marshal.

During my service, I prosecuted hundreds of RAF Courts Martial, including that of the Wing Commander who whilst looking round a car showroom during the first Gulf War left highly classified material on a laptop in his briefcase in his unattended staff car. The briefcase was stolen, but later posted back to the Ministry of Defence by the thief. I defended Army Courts Martial when abroad, serving 4 overseas tours in Germany and Cyprus. In Cyprus, I also appeared in the local Cypriot courts to represent service personnel, and was relieved that the courts were then obliged to hear British cases in English, and not Greek!

Later in my RAF career, legal advice was required on a wide range of matters including the rights of homosexuals to be admitted to the armed forces, the renegotiation of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement governing our personnel in Germany, and the legality under international law of aircraft striking particular enemy targets.

Having been awarded a CB (Mil) on retirement from the RAF, presented by Prince Charles (as Her Majesty had a bad knee), I started a new phase in my working life as a Commissioner for the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). The CCRC is the 'last chance saloon' for any convicted person whose appeal has failed first time around. We had the power to require the Court of Appeal to deal with a second appeal. During his time, I dealt with several complex and high profile cases including Timothy Evans (wrongly hung in 1952), Jeremy Bamber (recently dramatised on TV in White House Farm) and Barry George (originally convicted of Jill Dando's killing). After serving the statutory limit of 10 years with the CCRC, I then began part-time work in 2012, being appointed as a Crown Court Recorder, adjudicating for the Solicitors Regulation Authority, and most recently chairing disciplinary panels for nurses and midwives for the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). The NMC employment ceased when my term came to an end, coincidentally just as the lockdown was imposed, so I now have far fewer excuses for missing Probus meetings.



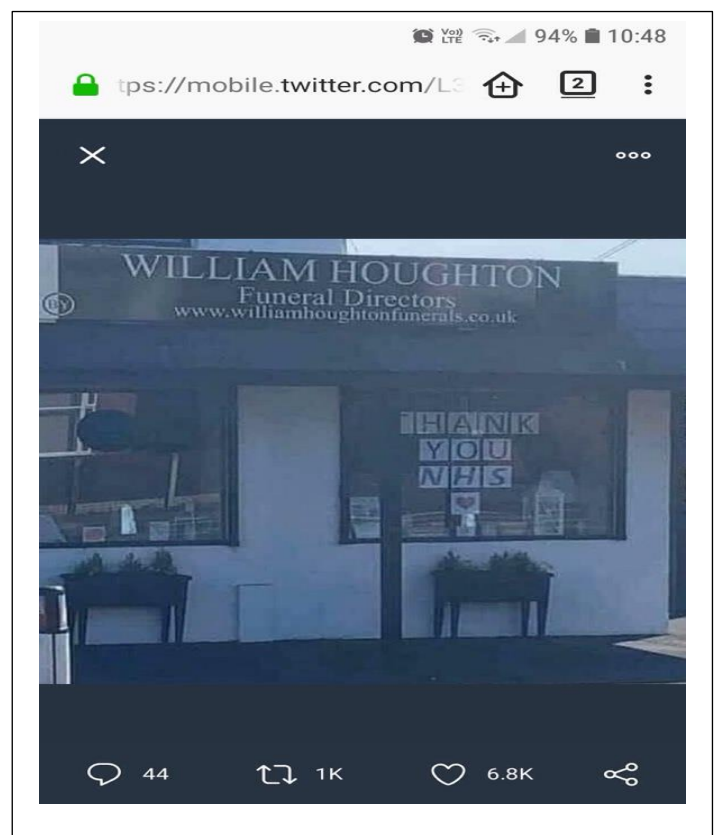
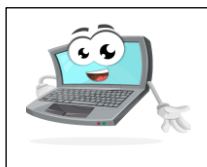
I live in Cliffords Mesne and am married to Marjanne, who is Dutch. We have 5 adult children, 4 grandchildren, 2 dogs, a horse and a Shetland pony. Finally, I notice that on becoming Vice Chair it is the second time in my life when my job title has included the word "Vice". There must be a reason.....

## Miscellany

Newent and District Probus Club is pleased that it has been able to donate £1000 cash boost to help fund the Lord's Larder food bank in Newent. This food bank serves those in need within Newent and the surrounding area.

The food bank supports families in need of food due to no fault of their own. It is a registered charity and works closely with organisations such as: Social Services, 2 Rivers Housing, C A B and others to ensure a robust caring service to those in need.

**For those who might not be able to watch the June 9th presentation on a small screen such as a tablet, it is possible to connect a computer to your TV via an HDMI cable and watch it on a larger one.**



## Health Warning

*Rather than depress everyone further with his medic's take on current events, **Dr Gareth Williams** contributes this timely reminder to anyone consulting a GP and finding himself advised that he's in need of an operation.....*

A man goes to the doctor's complaining of long standing constant severe headaches. After exhaustive tests, the doctor announces that he can cure the headaches, but the cure is castration. He explains to the patient, "You have a very rare condition that that causes your testicles to press up against your spine and the pressure causes a severe headache. The only cure is to remove your testicles ." The patient is naturally upset by this but after long deliberation he agrees to have the operation. When he leaves the hospital after the procedure, his headache has completely disappeared. Walking down the street on his way home he happens to pass a men's outfitters, He feels so good about himself that he decides to pop in and buy a new suit.

In the shop, the elderly tailor eyes him up & down quickly and says—"I guess you're a 40 long." The chap laughs and says, "How did you know?" "I've been in this business for 60 years," says the tailor.

The man tries on his new jacket, and it fits perfectly. As the man is admiring himself in the mirror, the tailor asks "How about a new shirt?"

"Ok" says the man. The tailor says, "Let me see, 16 & a half neck, 34 inch sleeve."

The man is surprised. "How did you know?" I have been doing this for 60 years," replies the tailor.

The shirt fits perfectly.

"You might like some new shoes as well," says the tailor. "I reckon you're size 9 E fitting."

"Absolutely right again" says the man—"How did you know?"

"60 years' experience," says the tailor.

The shoes fit perfectly again, and as the chap's walking around the shop, admiring his new look, the old tailor asks him –"How about some new underwear—We do a nice line in underpants."

"Yes," says the chap, "why not?"

The tailor steps back eyes the man's waist. "Size 36," he says.

"Aha," says the chap. "Wrong at last, I've been a 32 waist since I was 18 yrs old."

"No No," says the tailor. "If you wore size 32 underpants, your testicles would be pressed up against your spine and the pressure would cause a constant severe headache."

*The moral? Always get a second opinion.*

**Now you're allowed more exercise, don't set out without this essential kit.**



**Kate Moss**

@wroinghumans

I've just tested positive for covid.

The test and tracer asked who I've been in contact with so they can isolate them for 14 days.

I replied: Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson, Matt Hancock, Jacob Rees-Mog, Michael Gove, Dominic Raab and Donald Trump.

19:52 · 28 May 20 · Twitter for iPhone

## WILL TAXES HAVE TO RISE ?

The simple answer is yes, but when and by how much is a more difficult question to answer.

Only twelve years after the financial crisis our public finances are again under strain. A leaked Treasury report has indicated that the response to the corona virus will cost the government around £300 bn and lead to a financial deficit this year alone of £337bn. This is a staggering amount of money and is likely to lead to public debt exceeding 100% of GDP. That in itself does not necessarily mean that we have a crisis, after all debt was over 250% of GDP after WWII, but it is not a healthy state of affairs. As chancellor Gordon Brown set a "sustainable investment rule" that debt should not exceed 40 % of GDP, but that rule did not survive the financial crisis.

Unlike the rest of us, the government does not have to repay debt. As long as it can finance it at reasonable interest rates it can continue to borrow indefinitely. The catch is that they will only be able to raise money through issuing debt instruments if investors believe that their money is safe, particularly from inflation. It is a concern to me that recent gilt auctions by the debt management office only succeeded because the Bank of England rode to the rescue and bought up an equivalent amount of debt in the market. This process of quantitative easing is to my mind incestuous in that the debt management office and the Bank of England are different pockets of the same coat. I appreciate that the Bank of England has been granted independence but does a truly independent Bank really believe that buying up about £13.5bn of debt a week has suddenly become a good investment. I always keep in my wallet a 100 billion dollar note as a reminder of what happens if the currency becomes debased by a government that resorts to printing money to pay its way. It is drawn on the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, but we cannot afford to be complacent. If investors do not believe that the process of QE will be limited and eventually reversed, we could follow down that same unhealthy rabbit hole. As Dennis Turner, the chief economist of HSBC used to say, it is as unwise to plan on having a little bit of inflation as agreeing to be a little bit pregnant.

So if we are to avoid this particular trap there remain three ways forward; restrict spending, raise taxes or grow our way out of it. Desirable as the latter is, international investors are unlikely to grant us the time to do so without clear evidence that the UK government is committed to sound money. That is why I believe that we will have to demonstrate this commitment by showing that we are prepared to

see taxes raised while keeping public spending under control, even if this does not take effect for a year or two. Thereafter I anticipate that we are in for the long haul of higher taxation and tight belts for at least the next ten years. Nobody has the right to mortgage their children's future and we must not do so at a national level.

That leaves the question of which taxes will go up. Harold Macmillan was once asked what really worried him to which he is supposed to have replied, "events dear boy, events". There is no evidence that he actually said this which is a pity because it is so true. Against the advice of the IFS our governing party made a pre-election pledge that throughout the life of this parliament they would not raise the main rates of income tax, VAT or national insurance. Within just a few months they find themselves seriously constrained by this commitment on the three main tax raising measures available. Relatively few alternatives are available and none are at all palatable. Further restrictions on pension tax relief, fuel duty increases, increasing the rate of inheritance tax and a wealth tax have all been muted but I am not sure that they would raise enough and would in any event be any less damaging politically than breaking a pledge on income tax or VAT. A key fact that may let the government off the hook and allow these difficult but necessary decisions to be made is that it is almost five years before they have to face the voters again. Depending on your political persuasion, you may think this is enough time for them to be forgiven.

*Mike Warburton*

## Poetry Corner

If you can wash your hands ten times an hour  
Without becoming overly obsessed;  
If you can hold back tears when there's no flour  
Nor make an online search your daily quest;  
If you can keep at least two metres' distance  
From everyone (that's those you love as well)  
And not despair at your confined existence  
But strive to make a Heaven from this Hell.

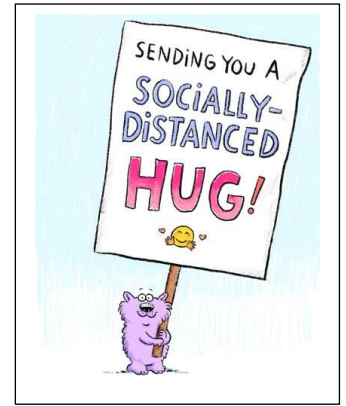
If you can work from home without succumbing  
To living in pyjamas, munching Twix;  
If daily updates have become brain-numbing  
And you can't swallow yet more politics;  
If you can live within each indoor minute,  
Not lust for travel plans you can't contrive,  
But cherish each small hope and how to spin it  
Then you might — but, no promises! — survive.  
*D.A. Prince/Rudyard Kipling*



## BIRTHDAYS IN JUNE

Wow!

**Seven** members birthdays in one month



<b>Harold Williams</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> June</b>	<b>(Morgan Freeman)</b>
<b>John Martin</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>(Bjorn Borg)</b>
<b>Trevor Knight</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>(Chris Evans)</b>
<b>Colin Chave</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>(Donald Trump)</b>

### *Shared birthdays*

Those born under **Gemini**, are ruled by the planet Mercury, which is associated with youth. Individuals born under Gemini often exhibit childlike traits and are cheerful, restless and full of life. They are very intelligent and are extremely inquisitive in nature.

<b>John Weeden</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> June</b>	<b>(Prince William)</b>
<b>Roger Beard</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>(Mike Yarwood)</b>
<b>Paul Dodd</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>(Ariana Grande)</b>

**Cancers** are highly intuitive, and their psychic abilities manifest in tangible spaces: For instance, **Cancers** can effortlessly pick up the energies of a room. These crabs are highly sensitive to their environments, as well as extremely self-protective.

*(You're telling me – Ed)*

### **Historical events that occurred in June**

<b>1 June 1946</b>	Television licences were issued in Britain for the first-time cost of £2
<b>5 June 1832</b>	Angry Parisians manned the barricades -Victor Hugo based his book “Les Misérables” on these events
<b>9 June 1934</b>	The world’s most famous duck, Donald, made his first appearance in the short Walt Disney cartoon <i>The Wise Little Hen</i> ,
<b>10 June 1829 -</b>	The Oxford team won the first-ever Oxford and Cambridge University Boat Race. Two eight-men crews raced each other along the River Thames in a contest of rowing power nicknamed simply “The Boat Race”
<b>11 June 323 BC</b>	Alexander the Great died after drinking binge
<b>13 June 1944</b>	The first V1 flying bomb, or “Doodle Bug” was dropped on London
<b>14 June 1645</b>	In the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell defeated the Royalists at Naseby
<b>21 June 1675</b>	Construction work started on Sir Christopher Wren’s St. Paul’s Cathedral in London
<b>25 June 1978</b>	In San Francisco, the artist Gilbert Baker designed a hippie-influenced rainbow flag with eight stripes, to be flown during the city’s Gay Freedom Day Parade
<b>26 June 1483</b>	Richard III began to rule England, having deposed his nephew, Edward V. Edward and his brother, Richard were imprisoned in the Tower of London and later murdered <i>(or “disappeared” – Mrs Ed)</i> .
<b>29 June 1613</b>	When a cannon misfired during a performance of <i>Henry VIII</i> , accidentally igniting the thatched roof, the Globe Theatre in Southwark burned to the ground