

NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

Inaugurated 23rd March 1977

MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER

June 2021

July Talks

13th

***Chernobyl: Nuclear
accidents the world
has forgotten –
Nicholas Brazil***

27th

***The Life and Work
of Rudyard Kipling –
Mike Bottomly***



June Diary



8th The History of the Postcode – Ray Stockall

Ray's talk covers from Rowland Hill, and the start of the 'modern' Royal Mail and the start of the first 'Postcodes' (i.e. London districts) up to today's Postcode. He also talks about automation, new developments, international postcodes and some quirks!



22nd RAF Court Martials and Boards of Enquiry – John Weeden

Chairman John, a Former Air Vice Marshal and head of the RAF Legal Branch gives an insight into some of the Court Martials and Boards of Enquiry he chaired during his career in the RAF.

News

At the most recent Zoom meeting the Chairman reported on the road map for resuming face-to-face Probuss sessions. The committee is proceeding with extreme caution over this, but subject to national progress out of the Covid restrictions we might be anticipating getting to Gorsley, our new venue, perhaps in late August or early September. Such events might allow a hybrid model for personal attendance and, with the aid of modern technology, digital transmission of the meetings to those who for health reasons might prefer to stay at home yet remain in contact. Any resumption in Gorsley will coincide with a recruitment drive. The committee will meet soon after the government's Big Date of June 21st to reassess the situation and inform members.

The Treasurer reported that **six members have still to pay their subscriptions!** Accounts are on the website, but in summary we have a current balance of around £4,500 which may reduce to around £2,500 by March of next year.



Bear in mind that if you have been missing reading the Probuss Magazine you can read it online via a link on this website.

UP, UP AND AWAY

When Erica Yong wrote her controversial novel *Fear of Flying* in the 1970s, going aloft was probably the last thing on her mind, at least in a literal sense. Her heroine's feet remained firmly on the ground, although from the many and varied positions that her fertile imagination illustrated, that is debatable.

Ron Jeffrey, our opening speaker for the start of the Probus year, was more down to earth even though that was the one thing that his talk, *Why is Flying So Safe*, hoped to avoid. As further evidence, if such evidence is needed, of the versatility of Zoom, Ron addressed us from his home in Spain with reception as good, if not better than many of our previous talks that came from within Newent itself.

Ron, a former commercial pilot with thousands of flying hours logged up, first gave us some statistics: with currently, pre Covid of course, at any one time around 10,000 planes airborne, containing a million passengers, flying has increased tenfold since the 1950s yet the accident rate has remained roughly the same at 14 respectively per year or, to put it another way, car journeys have a death rate of 1 per 40,000 passengers whereas the ratio for flying is some 1 per 11 million, yes million, passengers

Why then should this be so? Our speaker gave these examples where improvements in safety have taken place: Airframe, Engine, Avionics, Communications and Servicing.

A present day plane's airframe, or that bit of the plane covered by the fuselage that we never think about nor see, bears about as much resemblance to those of the immediate post war period as a Model T Ford does to a Formula One racing car. Principally in the use of new metals, the wing design has also helped increase survivability in the event of a crash. The swept back wing design helps the plane to cope with any unsustainability that comes with the advent of higher cruising speeds at higher altitudes.

If any single cause of aircraft safety can be identified it must surely be in the engine and to this we owe a great debt to Frank Whittle, whose name is synonymous with the jet engine and who indeed had many links with Gloucester, not least having a pub named after him near where he carried out so much development work on his engine.

Modern jets have so much more power, fuel economy enabling them to travel greater distances non stop and the indestructibility is legendary.

Avionics, a term perhaps unheard of less than half a century ago, covers the science and technology of the electronic devices that allow a pilot to operate the plane's systems, To give just one example, the fail safe systems that warn a pilot that he is flying dangerously low and take over to avert a possible disaster. Automatic landing systems in case of bad weather is another example of avionics.

Communications do not only cover a pilot being in touch with his ground control. Throughout the course of a journey, the engine transmits, at thirty minute intervals, to ground based engineers or increasingly computers, vital information which enables rectifying action to be taken, often without the pilot being aware of such action



Just like a car, each plane has a servicing schedule, albeit more stringent.. Apart from the standard pre-flight check services are mandatory at intervals of a month, six months, one year and virtually a complete overhaul at six years. Civil Aviation inspectors also have the powers to ground an aircraft should any of these not be carried out. Similarly a pilot has regular physical and competence tests. Passengers therefore should have no "*Fears of Flying*" but, human nature being what it is, who doesn't have sweaty palms when that metal tube hurtles along the runway prepared to climb to a height of seven miles at speeds of 600 mph?

Peter Hayes

"Civil Engineering is basically digging a hole and filling it with something."

John Bate, Civil Engineer, retired Chief Engineer on the Talylyn Railway



Understanding Heraldry

If you were a medieval soldier, having a coat of arms on your shield was quite a good idea as your friends could tell who you were, underneath that full body armour, and not try to kill you. By the same token you could recognise the enemy.

In his entertaining talk “An Introduction to Heraldry” John Bromley guided us gently through the intricacies of heraldic language and the features of a coat of arms, explaining those strange terms like *wyvern* and *gules* and *passant* (which describe the red dragon of Wales).



Starting with a Greek shield of about 3000BC, which told people that the bearer was a fierce man, through to the Roman standard bearers and the medieval knights, he showed that a coat of arms advertised a person in terms of power, piety or military prowess. Later versions would be joined with those of his wife’s family and, as his sons also incorporated these into their armorial bearings, a coat of arms could become immensely complex. One memorial for the Duke of Beaufort included no fewer than 719 different “quarters”.

Mr Bromley’s own interest was piqued through his hobby of metal detecting when he would find the remnants of a heraldic design on different object, including horse trappings, buttons and coins. For him it created a closer connection with the owner and their times if they could be identified as belonging to a particular person or their household. And by the end of this insightful talk, we too had been brought closer to the realms of chivalry.

Lee Hines

Postscript

With reference to our talk on 'Heraldry'. Former chairman Peter Lawson-Smith, now with Faringdon Probus, used to consult on the upkeep of historic buildings. On one occasion he was required to visit the PM's country residence Chequers. It is not widely known that every prime minister, as they leave office, is awarded a Coat of Arms.

Furthermore this escutcheon is engraved on a window at Chequers, together with the dates of their residence. While Peter waited he examined these engravings with much interest, noting PMs from Lloyd George through Churchill to Maggie. He was surprised by one omission - Ted Heath. On enquiring why this was so, he was told that Mr Heath insisted the window not be engraved until the end of his second term, so the correct dates would be included. He was never re-elected.

Peter Hines



Literary conundrum

Multiply the sum of the Duke of York’s army and Wordsworth’s daffodils by Macaulay’s bridge defenders. Divide this figure by Tennyson’s Light Brigade, then subtract the leaping Lords from the square root of the result. Is the answer a round number?

John Slack

Predictions

There are many 'experts' who seek to predict the future. Some project current trends (what Donald Rumsfeld called 'the know knowns') while others are more speculative (the 'known unknowns') but what fools them all is that the future is inherently unpredictable ('the unknown unknowns'). My favourite anecdote to illustrate this is the science fiction movie 'Blade Runner' made in 1985 by Ridley Scott and set in 2050. In the film robots have become so lifelike they are indistinguishable from humans, in fact the hero falls in love with one. But in order to phone her, he races round the city looking for a working payphone!

Peter Hines

Tieing* Up Loose Ends

May I make it clear that no disrespect was intended to tie wearers in last month's Newsletter. No plans have been reported to make tie wearing in Zoom meetings compulsory, and it is very much down to individual preference. Chairman John's tie was the epitome of style and elegance and entirely appropriate for the occasion even if not *de rigeur*. But just in case anyone is considering litigation, I would point out that I number a member of the Judiciary amongst my long time friends. And I've got Latin O level ready for use in court. *Cadit quaestio? De minimis non curat lex?*

Ed
*sic

She said, "that's the one I've been going on about, my nice pretty one." (the clock that is!!)

He said, "I think I had better see if I can sort it out then", thinking about how he was going to carve a replacement for the intricate woodwork which was missing, and how to repair the bellows. On closer inspection, the clock would 'cuck' but wouldn't 'oo', or was it the other way round?

The upshot of all this is that after quite a lot of proper horological engineering, serious woodcarving, staining and polishing, and wrestling with the bellows, we now have a different and very nice cuckoo clock on the wall as shown in the picture.

Anon
Lockdown 2020-2021

Lockdown Leisure(ii)

"Anon" has reconsidered his chronology and remembered some lockdown activity.....

He said, "I think I'll restore a clock."

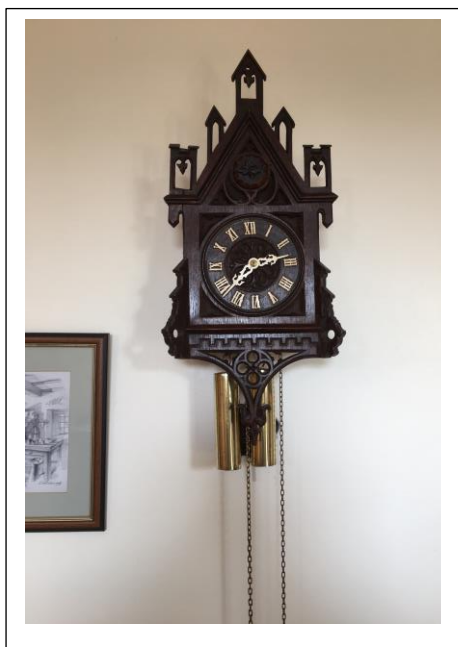
She said, "What about my cuckoo clock?"

He said to himself, "I don't like cuckoo clocks because they all look the same and they've got nasty innards."

He then said, "OK, I'll get round to it sometime but I fancy doing the miniature Vienna Regulator."

He then went to look for the above-mentioned clock and when he came back,

He said, "look what I've found", holding up the remains of an early (200 year old) rather interesting looking cuckoo clock.



Half a cauliflower...

A man went into a local supermarket asking to buy half a cauliflower. The young greens produce assistant told him that they sold only whole cauliflowers. The man persisted and asked to see the manager; so the boy went to find him. Walking into the stock room, unaware that the customer was following him, the boy said to his manager, "Some idiot out there wants to buy half a cauliflower." As he finished the sentence, he turned and was horrified to find the customer now standing right behind him so, quick as a flash he added, "And this gentleman has kindly offered to buy the other half."

The manager approved the deal, and the man went on his way....Later the manager said to the boy "I was impressed with the way you got yourself out of that situation earlier, we like people here who can think on their feet, where are you from son?"

"Cardiff, sir," the boy replied.

"Why did you leave Cardiff?" the manager asked.

The boy replied, "Sir there's absolutely nothing there but prostitutes and rugby players."

"Really?" said the manager, "My wife is from Cardiff."

"You're kidding!?" replied the boy. "What position did she play?"

