



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

August 2021

**SPECIAL
COVID SECURE
EDITION**

September

14th

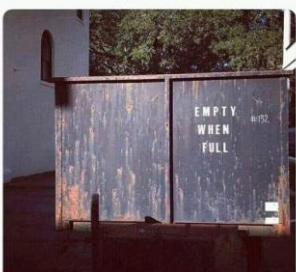
***The Mary Celeste: A
Mystery of the Sea –
Howard Nichols***

28th

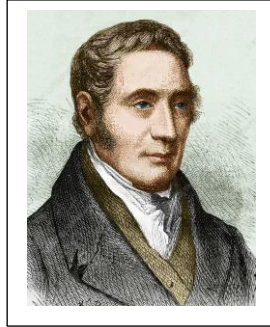
***Busting Brain Myths
– Dr Katy Bellamy***



Schrödinger's Dumpster



August Diary



10th George Stephenson, Man and Myth – Barry Dent

Stephenson was a somewhat controversial figure in his own lifetime. For over a century after his death, his reputation was coloured by a eulogistic biography and in his native North-East, many myths grew up around him. In 1990, the Bank of England featured him on the £5 note, triggering a reappraisal of his achievements and giving air to his many detractors. This talk is, hopefully, a balanced view of the speaker's (My!) boyhood hero and his place in engineering history.



24th A Shot in the Arm: the Pandemic in Perspective – Dennis Harvey

This talk is a retrospective look at pandemics through the ages and the development of vaccines to prevent, or at least, mitigate illness. Starting with the Chinese who introduced a form of vaccination as long as 3000 years ago I trace the procedure through to the present day. I will also point out how in the 18th and 19th centuries there was considerable public reluctance to be vaccinated, Such reluctance is still in very much in evidence today.

From the Chairman

Dear Members,

The key dates pass by, the variant strains increase and decrease, but still we don't really know where we are in relation to covid. However, the general picture is one of improvement and we are getting closer to holding our meetings in person again. As announced at our recent meeting we are now aiming for 28 September (2021!) as our first face to face meeting since early last year.

More details will follow nearer the time, and of course the date can be changed if necessary because of any adverse developments in the pandemic. We shall be carrying out a full risk assessment and sharing it with you and we shall also ensure appropriate precautions are taken in relation to hand washing, social distance, open windows etc. In the meantime the Webmaster and his merry men have been working hard to ensure that Gorsley Village Hall is fit for our purposes audio-visually, There may also be a facility to let members join our meeting on Gorsley by Zoom if they prefer. Watch this space!

Recruitment is a big theme this year and there are already some promising signs that new members are in the pipeline. Please encourage any of your colleagues who might like to join to do so. In this connection we are intending to hold a recruitment themed meeting and buffet at the end of October following a leaflet drop in Gorsley and Kilcot and notices in Newent and surrounding areas. My promise of a bottle of wine to successful recruiters, of course, remains!

On a sad note we are aware that Michael Keene is poorly in hospital and we send him and Ann our very best wishes.

Regards,
John

Nuclear accidents the world has forgotten

We had a very interesting talk by Nicholas Brazil on the nuclear accidents the world has forgotten.



A scientist Werner Heisenberg of The Third Reich in Nazi Germany first started to develop the nuclear bomb, the L-IV reactor in Leipzig in 1942. The experimental nuclear reactor had a leak of heavy water and blew up on 23rd June 1942. In this year Heisenberg told Albert Speer the German A-bomb would not be ready until 1945. Project Alsos 1945, as it was known, the experimental reactor was dismantled, in Haigerloch, Germany in 1945.

On March 1, 1954, the United States conducted its largest thermonuclear weapon test in Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands; the detonation was code-named "Castle Bravo." Radioactive deposits in the ocean sediment at the bomb crater are widespread and high levels of contamination remain today. An ageing fishing boat, ("Lucky Dragon No. 5") while the ship is near Bikini Atoll, the ship's navigator sees a flash. All the crew come up to watch. They realize it is an atomic explosion, but take the time to clear their fishing gear. A short time later, grey ash starts to fall on the ship. The men are taken to hospitals in Tokyo, leaving their families behind. The radio operator, dies from the radiation. Compensation was paid out at \$150 million.

Kyshtym / Mayak Disasters 1957 & 1968: it was eventually revealed that the Kyshtym disaster was a consequence of the failure to repair a malfunctioning cooling system in a buried tank where liquid reactor waste was stored. For more than a year the tank's contents grew steadily hotter from radioactive decay, reaching a temperature of about 660 °F (350 °C) by September 29, 1957, when the tank exploded with a force equivalent to at least 70 tons of TNT. The nonnuclear explosion blew off the tank's one-metre-thick concrete lid and sent a plume of radioactive fallout. This resulted in the death of 8,000 people.

The Semipalatinsk Test Site, Kazakhstan (STS or Semipalatinsk-21), also known as "The Polygon", was the primary testing venue for the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons. It is located on the steppe in north-east Kazakhstan (then the Kazakh SSR), south of the valley of the Irtysh River. The scientific buildings for the test site were located around 150 km (93 mi) west of the town of Semipalatinsk (later renamed Semey), near the border of East Kazakhstan Region and Pavlodar Region with most of the nuclear tests taking place at various sites further to the west and south, some as far as into Karagandy Region.

The Soviet Union conducted 456 nuclear tests at Semipalatinsk from 1949 until 1989 with little regard for their effect on the local people or environment. 200,000 people directly affected by the tests, 1 in 20 children born with deformities, 50% of the population die before they are 60 and high level of wide range of cancer in the local population. The full impact of radiation exposure was hidden for many years by Soviet authorities and has only come to light since the test site closed in 1991. Clean up costs \$150 million.

The Windscale Fire 10th October 1957 was the worst nuclear accident in the United Kingdom's history, and one of the worst in the world, ranked in severity at level 5 out of a possible 7 on the International Nuclear Event Scale The fire took place in Unit 1 of the two-pile Windscale facility on the northwest coast of England in Cumberland. Scaffold rods tried shifting the fuel canisters, to no avail, they even melted. 25 tonnes of carbon dioxide were put onto the fire and it did not work. Finally they put it out with water – a high-risk strategy. Repercussions, release of highly dangerous iodine – 131 and polonium – 210, covering Northern UK and Europe as far as Norway. A 2010 study of workers involved in the clean up of the accident found no significant long-term health effects from their involvement.

The Rocky Flats Plant 3 nuclear 1953 - 1997 was a U.S. manufacturing complex that produced nuclear weapons parts in the western United States, near Denver, Colorado. Fire 1, September 11, 1957. Broke out in a glove box and spread. Cause: plutonium shavings. Result radioactive plutonium realised into atmosphere. Damage \$818,600. Mothers Day fire 11th May 1969, like earlier fire broke out in glove box – fire suppressors had not been fitted, as recommended. Filters were fire resistant, metal plate accidentally left in production line diverted fire to 2-story building. Accident cut electricity supply stopping fans feeding the flames. Repercussions, 41 workers seriously irradiated. Cost of accident \$70 million.

The Tybee Island mid-air collision was an incident on February 5, 1958, in which the United States Air Force lost a 7,600-pound (3,400 kg)

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Mark 15 nuclear bomb in the waters off Tybee Island near Savannah, Georgia, United States. During a practice exercise, an F-86 fighter plane collided with the B-47 bomber carrying the bomb. To protect the aircrew from a possible detonation in the event of a crash, the bomb was jettisoned. Following several unsuccessful searches, the bomb was presumed lost somewhere in Wassaw Sound off the shores of Tybee Island.

Some examples of American aircraft and Russian / USS naval submarine nuclear disasters were shown and explained in the presentation, with large losses of life.

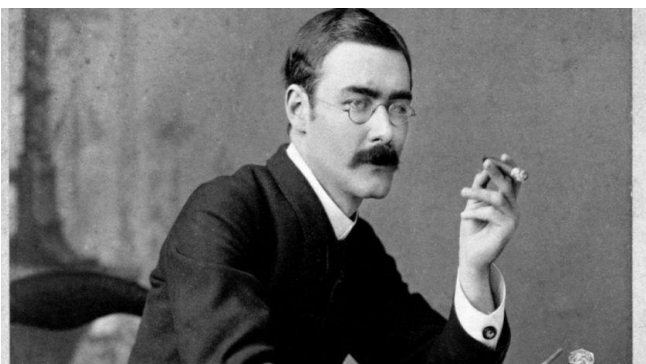
Kitty Litter Explosion Waste Isolation Plant 14th February 2014. Incident at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. Nuclear weapon waste stored in an ancient salt block 3,300 feet thick and 2,150 feet below the surface. A nuclear waste explosion that exposed 21 federal workers to radiation was caused by a mix-up in kitty litter. Cost of incident \$2billion.

Several questions were raised after the presentation.

Mike Townsend

Rudyard Kipling

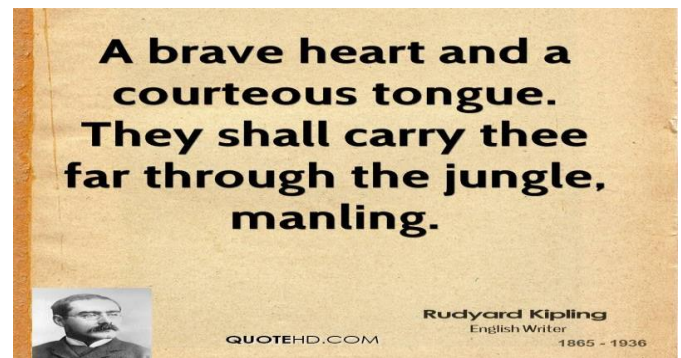
Some years ago a fashionable theory did the rounds, which went something like this, heavily paraphrased [with apologies to the originator] "..... there are six degrees of separation..... by which everyone on Earth is connected" . Fraser, our genial secretary, gave me an example of this during John Bottomley's excellent talk on the life of Rudyard Kipling, when on hearing that Kipling, as a schoolboy, had been taught at the United Services College at Westward HO in Devon, told me that this building has since been converted to apartments and his daughter, at one time, lived in one of them. Could she, I wondered, have shared a room, albeit separated by a century, with a young Rudyard?



OK this is stretching the theory so back to reality. On introducing his talk, John admitted that perhaps Kipling, whose stories are redolent of Empire, was currently out of favour. But, he argued, he was "a man of his Time" and, in any event, would our great grand children be apologising for some of the quite acceptable things we are currently saying or even doing?

Kipling was born in India in 1865 to middle class parents but he was sent back to England for his education. This was not a happy time for him as he was both mentally and physically abused by his guardian. When he returned to India however, he found his true calling and, at the early age of 16 became the assistant editor of the *Civil & Military Gazette*. Articles of an exceedingly wide range of subject followed and it was here, as he gained maturity, that his feeling for the "underdog" begins to show; a trait not always apparent in Victorian England. This was especially noticeable in his poem *Tommy* in which he contrasts the treatment that the ordinary soldier received in war and in peace..

Back in England, he prospered both intellectually and financially being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907, being the youngest recipient at the time to receive this award. Internationally he was recognised and numbered among his equals such luminaries as Mark Twain and the future Lord Beaverbrook, Max Aitken.



An early opponent of Nazism, he saw the danger that Hitler presented to the West. Ironically his son John , who had defied medical advice to enlist in the Army, was tragically killed in the early days of the war. Although he would always deny it, it was claimed by many that one of his best known poems *My Boy Jack* was based on his son. Possibly, in atonement for his loss, he played a great part in the setting up of the Imperial [now Commonwealth] War Graves Commission and he wrote many of the short inscriptions that appears on so many headstones, including *Known unto God* and *Lest we forget*.

He died, in Sussex in 1935 and his home is marked by a Blue Plaque.

Peter Hayes

Poetry Corner: Ed's Choice

Danny Deever

"WHAT are the bugles blowin' for? " said Files-on-Parade.

"To turn you out, to turn you out," the Colour-Sergeant said.

"What makes you look so white, so white? " said Files-on-Parade.

"I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch," the Colour-Sergeant said.

For they're hangin' Danny Deever, you can hear the Dead March play

The regiment's in 'ollow square - they're hangin' him to-day;

They've taken of his buttons off an' cut his stripes away,

An' they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

"What makes the rear-rank breathe so 'ard? " said Files-on-Parade.

"It's bitter cold, it's bitter cold," the Colour-Sergeant said.

"What makes that front-rank man fall down? " said Files-on-Parade.

"A touch o' sun, a touch o' sun," the Colour-Sergeant said.

They are hangin' Danny Deever, they are marchin' of 'im round,

They 'ave 'altered Danny Deever by 'is coffin on the ground;

An' e'll swing in 'arf a minute for a sneakin' shootin' hound

0 they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'!

" 'Is cot was right-'and cot to mine," said Files-on-Parade.

" 'E's sleepin' out an' far to-night," the Colour-Sergeant said.

"I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times," said Files-on-Parade.

" 'E's drinkin' bitter beer alone," the Colour-Sergeant said.

They are hangin' Danny Deever, you must mark 'im to 'is place,

For 'e shot a comrade sleepin' - you must look 'im in the face;

Nine 'undred of 'is county an' the Regiment's disgrace,

While they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

"What's that so black agin the sun? " said Files-on-Parade.

"It's Danny fightin' 'ard for life," the Colour-Sergeant said.

"What's that that whimpers over'ead? " said Files-on-Parade.

"It's Danny's soul that's passin' now," the Colour-Sergeant said.

For they're done with Danny Deever, you can 'ear the quickstep play

The regiment's in column, an' they're marchin' us away;

Ho! the young recruits are shakin', an' they'll want their beer to-day,

After hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

Rudyard Kipling

The Coward

I could not look on Death, which being known,
Men led me to him, blindfold and alone.

A Dead Statesman

I could not dig: I dared not rob:
Therefore I lied to please the mob.
Now all my lies are proved untrue
And I must face the men I slew.
What tale shall serve me here among
Mine angry and defrauded young?

Rudyard Kipling – epitaphs

Miscellany

The club does not at present have an almoner, whose function is to stay in touch with members who may be ill, hospitalised or in need of some other kind of help. We do therefore depend on members and/or their partners to report to secretary Fraser anyone who would benefit from being contacted outside meetings. Please don't assume that if you are unwell, we know about it. Vice-Chairman Andrew is acting as liaison almoner, so you can also tell him, and each committee member has a list of people to keep in touch with during the "time of covid".

John Martin is keen to receive well evidenced suggestions as to where might be suitable for our Christmas Lunch, provisionally arranged for December 14th. The venue needs to be large enough, with decent accessibility and parking.

The meeting on July 27th was another Probus first, with Chairman John welcoming everyone via modern technology from his caravan in the middle of a Northumberland field, carrying the concept of social distancing to a whole new level and allowing members to enjoy a brief flypast by his mates in the RAF. Unless, of course, it was those pesky Russkies.

The young woman who submitted the tech support message below (about her relationship to her husband) presumably did it as a joke. Then she got a reply that was way too good to keep to herself. The tech support people's love advice was hilarious and genius!

The query: Dear Tech Support,

Last year I upgraded from Boyfriend 5.0 to Husband 1.0 and noticed a distinct slowdown in overall system performance, particularly in the flower and jewellery applications, which operated flawlessly under Boyfriend 5.0.

In addition, Husband 1.0 uninstalled many other valuable programs, such as Romance 9.5 and Personal Attention 6.5, and then installed undesirable programs such as: NBA 5.0, NFL 3.0 and Golf Clubs 4.1.

Conversation 8.0 no longer runs, and House cleaning 2.6 simply crashes the system.

Please note that I have tried running Nagging 5.3 to fix these problems, but to no avail.

What can I do?

Signed: Desperate

The response (that came weeks later out of the blue)...

Dear Desperate,

First keep in mind, Boyfriend 5.0 is an Entertainment Package, while Husband 1.0 is an operating system.

Please enter command: I thought you loved me.html and try to download Tears 6.2.

Do not forget to install the Guilt 3.0 update. If that application works as designed, Husband 1.0 should then automatically run the applications Jewellery 2.0 and Flowers 3.5.

However, remember, overuse of the above application can cause Husband 1.0 to default to Grumpy Silence 2.5, Happy Hour 7.0, or Beer 6.1.

Please note that Beer 6.1 is a very bad program that will download Snoring Loudly Beta version. Whatever you do, DO NOT, under any circumstances, install Mother-In-Law 1.0 as it runs a virus in the background that will eventually seize control of all your system resources.

In addition, please do not attempt to re-install the Boyfriend 5.0 program. These are unsupported applications and will crash Husband 1.0.

In summary, Husband 1.0 is a great program, but it does have limited memory and cannot learn new applications quickly.

You might consider buying additional software to improve memory and performance. We recommend Cooking 3.0.

Good Luck

Tech Support Team

International Time Differences

One of the Russian Ambassadors comes to President Putin and tells him he'd like to resign.

"Why?" Putin asks him.

"Ah, Mr. President, I can't take these time differences! I fly to another city, call home and everyone is asleep, I last woke you up at 4 in the morning, but I thought it was only evening, I call Angela Merkel to congratulate her on her birthday and she tells me she had it yesterday, I wish the Chinese President a happy New Year, and he says it will be tomorrow."

"Well, these are just minor inconveniences," says Putin. "Do you remember when that Polish plane crashed, killing their president? I called them to express my condolences, but the plane hadn't yet taken off!"



Man who wants pretty nurse must be patient.

Lady who goes camping with man must beware of evil intent.

Man who leaps off cliff jumps to conclusion.

Man who runs in front of car gets tired, but man who runs behind car gets exhausted.

Man who eats many prunes gets good run for money.

War does not determine who is right; it determines who is left.

Man who fights with wife all day get no piece at night.

Man who drives like hell is bound to get there.

Grandpa Simpson to Homer: "I used to be with it, until they changed what 'it' was."

"Alcohol is the cause of, and solution to all life's problems."

Homer Simpson

"We're supposed to look up to our elders, but as time goes on I'm having more trouble finding any."

Attrib Winston Churchill

"Whenever I watch TV and see those poor starving kids all over the world, I can't help but cry. I mean I'd love to be skinny like that, but not with all those flies and death and stuff."

Mariah Carey

"Smoking kills. If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life,"

Brooke Shields, during an interview to become spokesperson for federal anti-smoking campaign

Why do they call it the novel coronavirus?

It's a long story....

I'll tell you a coronavirus joke now, but you'll have to wait two weeks to see if you got it.

The World Health Organization has announced that dogs cannot contract Covid-19. Dogs previously held in quarantine can now be released. To be clear, WHO let the dogs out.

There will be a minor baby boom in 9 months, and then one day in 2033, we shall witness the rise of **the quaranteens.**

This is what we, who are aged 70 or 80 years plus, can look forward to.

This is something that happened at an assisted living center. The people who lived there had small apartments but they all ate at a central cafeteria. One morning one of the residents didn't show up for breakfast so my wife went upstairs and knocked on his door to see if everything was OK. She could hear him through the door and he said that he was running late and would be down shortly, so she went back to the dining area.

An hour later he still hadn't arrived, so she went back up towards his room but found him on the stairs. He was coming down the stairs but was having a hard time. He had a death grip on the hand rail and seemed to have trouble getting his legs to work right. She told him she was going to call an ambulance but he told her no, he wasn't in any pain and just wanted to have his breakfast. So, she helped him the rest of the way down the stairs and he had his breakfast. When he tried to return to his room, he was completely unable to get up even the first stair step, so they called an ambulance for him.

A couple of hours later she called the hospital to see how he was doing. The receptionist there said he was fine, he just had both of his legs in one side of his boxer shorts.

I'm sending this to my children so that they don't sell the house before they know all the facts.