



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

Andrew Graham: Chairman

Tel: 01531 820781 Email: amgraham44@gmail.com

Fraser Gunn; Honorary Secretary

Tel: 07960 463462 Email: fraser.gunn@live.com

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD

TUESDAY 12 July 2022

Chairman: Andrew welcomed members.

Apologies: Paul Dodd, Chris Lathan, David Clowes, John Oakman, Fraser Gunn and Roger Beard.

Minutes of last meeting: Held on 14 June 2022 previously displayed on the club website were accepted as a true record.

Matters Arising: None

Treasurer: Mike said that interim accounts were now due and would be on the website shortly. He emphasised that he liked to collect in money for events in advance, and reminded those that had not paid for the forthcoming garden party to do so asap.

Speaker Secretary: Nothing to report

Pub Lunches: Peter recorded that the recent pub lunch at the Mill Race in Wolford had gone well. The food had been excellent albeit the service had been a little slow. He confirmed that there would be no pub lunch in August due to the proximity of the garden party at the end of July, but he anticipated there would be a lunch arranged for each of the last 4 months of the year. He hoped to venture into the Forest of Dean for at least one of those lunches.

Outings: Nothing to report

Theatre Trips: Nothing to report

Webmaster: Ray Confirmed that the website was now up and running

AOB: Andrew had been to the Gatehouse in Lower Brockhampton near Bromyard and thoroughly recommended it to members.

Today's Speaker: Dr Katie Bellamy – FALSE MEMORY

This was Katie's second address to us within a few months and she was as entertaining as ever in her remarks about false memory.

We all have them. In 1914 Professor Bartlett started to research memory. Recall was generally thought to be accurate then, but he found that not to be the case in Asian countries.

They had a more philosophical view. He carried out experiments and wrote a book “Remembering” about them. He found that well known stories like King Arthur would all be told differently, but he then discovered native American stories that had been regularly told. He found dramatic changes in retellings which may have been weeks or months later. Canoes became boats. Paddles became oars. Major parts were omitted. He concluded that memory is biased by social and cultural issues and memories are made to fit with life experience. In a famous experiment a group of Americans was asked to count the number of passes in a basketball match shown on TV. Not one saw a gorilla walk past at a certain point. There were expectations of what they would see and the brain had ignored the gorilla. The Professor concluded that memory was a reconstructive process, drawing from different storage spaces within the brain. There were no MRI scans available to him but later experiments have shown that the memory, of e.g., a birthday party, will light up several different parts of the brain before eventually emerging from the hippocampus. Bartlett’s work made him the godfather of psychology and changed the way we think about memory.

In the seventies and eighties Dr Elizabeth Loftus promoted regressive hypnotherapy, claiming to reveal hidden childhood memories, many of sexual abuse. However, you cannot forget a traumatic memory. She saw the head as containing various cabinets which are used to put memory together. Old memories are removed or replaced and an account can be created bearing little resemblance to the truth. Too much information cannot be handled. Perceptual details are difficult to recall. Regarding very young children their memories before 5 years old cannot be relied upon as the hippocampus doesn’t form until you are 5 years old – any claimed memory before that has been influenced by other issues e.g., photos etc. Suggestions from others can affect memory. Some 300 cases in the US involved prosecuting people who were not even present at the crime. Over 1100 cases were overturned because of concerns about false memory.

Later events can change a memory. Scientists have worked on flashbulb memories i.e., where were you when Kennedy assassinated, twin towers attacked etc? Some claim to recall seeing on TV the first plane hit the twin towers but this cannot have been possible as it was not televised. Bizarrely you have to have false memories to form true memories. Memories slowly degrade so they are better closer to the time of the event. It is false memory that keeps true memory going. In the case of dementia, the patient will have both false and true memory recall operating at once.

After telling a story of a memory about 6 or 7 times the core elements are likely to remain for the future, but peripheral details will still change. When emotion is present then the amygdala is involved and 2 copies are laid down – one in the hippocampus and one in the frontal cortex of the brains.

This was clearly a complex topic with surprising assertions, and raised numerous questions from the floor for Katie to answer.

Birthdays: None –In Frasers absence Mike Warburton told one of his popular jokes.

Next Meeting: Garden Party on 26 July and normal meeting on 9 August 2022