

NEWSLETTER



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



U P C O M I N G
E V E N T S

CHRISTMAS LUNCH - TUESDAY - 13 DECEMBER

Hatherley Manor Hotel, Down Hatherley Lane,
Gloucester, GL2 9QA

12.30 for 1pm



Directions

From Newent follow B4215 to Gloucs. Then onto A40. 2nd exit at roundabout, stay on A40. At next roundabout take 1st exit onto A38 Tewkesbury Road. Through Twigworth just past Garden Centre turn right into Hatherley Lane, sign posted Down Hatherley. After about 1 mile the Hotel is on left.



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN



It seems only a short while ago that I was sitting in a Carlisle hotel writing a note under some time pressure. I now have time to spare but as nothing of great importance has happened, I am at somewhat of a loss for something to tell you. A few changes have taken place within the club in that Kelvin has stepped in as acting secretary in order to relieve Fraser of one of his roles. Hopefully Kelvin will agree to take over the role at the AGM. I am also hopeful that it will be possible to arrange a skittles evening at the Kings Arms in late January or February. My thanks to all those who volunteer to try and get events going again. With luck the club is returning very much to how it was before Covid became part of our lives with the exception of activities involving coach tours which still cause a concern for some members.

You will of course read this before most of us meet for the Christmas lunch. If you are stuck over the photo quiz then I will reveal all at the lunch but remember that I have mentioned where it is, if not what it is, in the last newsletter. In the meantime, I wish those of you unable to join us at Hatherley Manor a peaceful but enjoyable Christmas and good health in the New Year.

Andrew



THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON 1666

Another home grown talk this week, the third in a row; what a knowledgeable lot we are. This time it was given by our genial secretary Fraser and can be seen, or rather listened to, as a prequel to his one on the fire at Windsor Castle.

This time he went back in time, over 350 years to be imprecise to 1666, the time of the great fire of London. Although obviously the most well known conflagration, it was by no means the first one. Earlier ones had destroyed St Paul's, (twice) London Bridge and much else besides.

By present day's standards, it was an accident waiting to happen. The City of London was confined to a cramped area, largely built of combustible materials such as timber topped with straw thatch. No fire brigade as such and only the most rudimentary firefighting equipment and above all there was no plan of what to do if and when such a fire broke out; *ad-hockery* ruled! One saving grace was the proximity of the river Thames, both for its dowsing properties and the provision of an escape route should such an eventuality be needed.

It was a late summer's evening on 6 September 1666 when baker Thomas Farriner took care to extinguish his fires at his premises at Pudding Lane and locked up before retiring to bed. Soon afterward, flames were ripping through the building, fanned by a keen East wind, through the adjoining properties as well. Streets were narrow; space for building new was necessarily limited; instead, extra storeys were added and, to give extra stability, they were made to overhang or "jettied". Of course, then, the higher the building so the narrower the gap became to its opposite neighbour. This made for a much quicker spread of fire not only to adjoining but also to opposite properties as well. The lack of any one central organisation charged with dealing with such emergencies, necessarily hampered efforts to deal with the fire.

Even when one such person, the Lord Mayor Sir Thomas Bloodworth was appointed, he proved useless. Due to his indecisiveness and his inability to deal with the situation, he eventually washed his hands of the whole proceedings, saying "I'm off to bed"

More by luck than judgement, the fire was eventually brought under control, partly through burning itself out, thus providing natural firebreaks but also by the massive stone, and thus fireproof walls of the Tower of London. Unbeknownst to the fire fighters though, this almost led to a worse tragedy as the cellars there contained over 500 tons of "black powder, a highly flammable and explosive form of gun powder.

Tragedies always have their fair share of the mentally unhinged and one such was a Frenchman Robert Hibbert who admitted being the culprit who started the fire. No matter that he claimed to have hurled a fire grenade through the window of the "windowless bakery" and he was never proved to have been anywhere near the fire site, he was duly hanged at Tyburn; his nationality, that of England's mortal enemy may well have influenced the verdict.

The inevitable inquest, or Public Inquiry, could not apportion blame to any company or organisation other than some vague attribution of blame to either the Dutch or the French; indeed, the site of the fire did not even get a mention.

Efforts to rebuild the City were of necessity hampered by self-interest. A grandiose plan by no less than Sir Christopher Wren to copy the wide open spaces and boulevards of Paris came to nothing due to the desire of landowners to get their properties working and functional as soon as possible. In today's money the Fire was estimated to have cost at least £163 billion but the human cost was priceless. Only six deaths were recorded but the true number will never be known; possibly in the thousands.

Fraser can always be relied on to produce something out of the ordinary and his talk was no exception.

Peter Hayes

Some people thought that the Great Fire starting on Pudding Lane was a warning against the city's greed, which is why you'll find another

lesser-known monument to the Great Fire of London,

The Golden Boy of Pye Corner on the corner of Cock Lane.

Bearing the phrase "***This Boy is in memory, put up for the FIRE of LONDON Occasioned by the Sin of Gluttony.***"

he marks the western spot where the fire ended.

Strange Trivia

The Monument to the Great Fire killed more people than the official death toll of the fire. Only 6 people died in the fire, but eight people were killed falling off the viewing platform before a cage was erected in 1842



The Gloucestershire Regiment at the Battle of the Imjin River, Korea, 1951

The battle of the Imjin River was fought between the 22nd and 25th April 1951 during the Korean War (1950-53), the Battle of the Imjin (22-25 April 1951) was the bloodiest engagement endured by the British Army since the Second World War. For three days, the 29th British Independent Infantry Brigade Group held off the Chinese Spring Offensive.

The significance of the Imjin River is that geographically, Korea is a mountainous country and the Imjin River North of Seoul and the 38th parallel forms a strategic crossing point.

To put this into context, Dr Brain talked us through the post WW2 American and Soviet concerns over the influence of the major national powers close to Korea which led to the partition of Korea along the 38th Parallel. The country was split into the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the American-backed Republic of Korea (South Korea).

On 25 June 1950 the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) invaded its southern neighbour. The United Nations (UN) called upon its members to support South Korea, and American forces were sent in, later to be joined by troops from other countries, including Britain.

Initially, the North Koreans made rapid progress, taking the capital Seoul and driving back the South Koreans and Americans. By September, South Korean and UN forces counter-attacked with a bombing campaign against the NKPA and North Korea which, followed by an amphibious assault on 15-19 September in the enemy rear, cut the North Koreans' communications and allowed the UN to advance north, capturing Pyongyang and arriving at the Chinese border.

During November, against all intelligence assessments, the Chinese attacked in great strength. In freezing conditions, UN forces retreated. and by the end of 1950, the Chinese were across the 38th Parallel and had captured Seoul.

In March 1951 a UN counter-offensive pushed the Chinese back and recaptured Seoul, the city's fourth conquest in a year, leaving it in ruins. As winter cleared, the UN dug in close to the 38th Parallel and in early spring advanced north to create a buffer in front of Seoul. In April the Chinese counter-attacked, aiming to break through to the city.

A vital sector of the UN line was held by the 29th British Independent Infantry Brigade Group consisting of 1st Battalion the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, 1st Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel James Carne, 1st Battalion The Royal Ulster Rifles and the Belgian Battalion which included the Luxembourg contingent.

Supporting arms included a tank squadron of 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, 25-pounder guns of 45th Field Regiment Royal Artillery and 4.2-inch mortars of 170th Independent Mortar Battery. The Chinese offensive involved 300,000 troops attacking over a 40-mile front.

Despite facing a numerically superior enemy, 29th Infantry Brigade held its positions for 3 days. When the units of 29th Infantry Brigade were forced back, their actions in the Battle of the Imjin River together with those of other UN forces blunted the impetus of the Chinese offensive and allowed UN forces to retreat to prepared defensive positions north of Seoul, where the Chinese were halted

“Though minor in scale, the battle's ferocity caught the imagination of the world”, especially the fate of the 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, which was outnumbered and eventually surrounded by Chinese forces on Hill 235, a feature that became known as Gloster Hill. The stand of the Gloucestershire battalion together with other actions of 29th Brigade in the Battle of the Imjin River have become an important part of British military history and tradition. By the morning of 24 April, Carne and the surviving Glosters gathered on Hill 235 where they were ordered to hold their ground and await reinforcements which were forced to retreat just 2,000 yards (1,800 m) short of the Glosters' position, leaving them alone in trying to hold Hill 235 against an entire Chinese division. Both sides fought fiercely throughout the night for control over the hill and by the morning of 25 April, the Glosters still held the hill but with very little ammunition and no hope of relief or artillery support, Carne requested permission to attempt a breakout and ordered his men to split into small groups and try to make their way back to the British lines. Only 63 of his men succeeded in doing so, with the rest of the battalion, including Carne, being either killed, captured or wounded. Despite the battalion's effective annihilation, the Gloster's stand earned them worldwide fame as, 'The Glorious Glosters', enabling the rest of the British and American forces to retreat before they too were overwhelmed.

Carne fell into Chinese captivity after his 700-man battalion's astonishing resistance against an estimated 11,000 attackers was finally overcome. As the senior British officer among hundreds of prisoners kept in appalling conditions in camps in communist-held Korea, he was singled out for special treatment. While the other ranks were "re-educated" by the communist commissars at their camps, Carne was kept in solitary confinement. Famously, during his imprisonment, he carved a 5-inch Celtic Cross out of volcanic rock with only a nail with which to do his carving. This is now in safe-keeping in Gloucester Cathedral with a stone replica on display.

John Martin



Lt Col James Carne

July 1951: Awarded the **Distinguished Service Order** for Gallantry

October 1953: Awarded the **Victoria Cross** in recognition of gallant and distinguished service in Korea

October 1953: Awarded the **Distinguished Service Cross** by the President of the United States for gallant and distinguished service during operations by the United Nations in Korea.

His **Victoria Cross** is on display at the **Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum in Gloucester Docks**



Snowball

I made myself a snowball,
As perfect as could be,
I thought I'd keep it as a pet,
And let it sleep with me.

I made it some pyjamas,
And a pillow for its head,
Then last night it ran away,
But first - it wet the bed!

Shel Silverstein

Once There Was a Snowman

Once there was a snowman,
Who stood outside the door,
He wished that he could come inside,
And run about the floor.
He wished that he could warm himself,
Beside the fire, so red,
He wished that he could climb
Upon the big white bed.

So he called to the North Wind,
"Come and help me, pray,
For I'm completely frozen,
Standing here all day."
So the North Wind came along,
And blew him in the door,
And now there nothing left,
But a puddle on the floor!

Anon

Answer to last month's picture quiz was:

**Westward Ho!
"The Tobermory" of
North Devon**

The funniest face
looked out at me
From a silver ball
On the Christmas
Tree!

At first I thought
It was Santa's elf,
But I looked again and
It was just myself!

Anon

**This month's
picture quiz**



CHRISTMAS QUIZ

WHAT ARE THESE?



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. Which country started the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree?
2. How many Ghosts showed up in "A Christmas Carol" ?
3. In which country did Eggnog originate ?
4. How many gifts were given in total in "The Twelve Days of Christmas" song?
5. In which country is it tradition to eat KFC for Christmas dinner?
6. In the film "Love Actually", which character sang "Christmas is all around" and what was the name of the actor playing the part?
7. How many of Rudolph's reindeer's name began with the letter "D"?
8. Which city has been donating the Christmas Tree in Trafalgar Square every year since 1947?
9. In what classic novel does the protagonist set sail for a sea voyage on a cold Christmas day?
10. If you were born on Christmas Day, what is your star sign?
11. What is the best-selling Christmas record of all time?
12. What time is the Monarchs speech to the nation traditional broadcast on Christmas Day?
13. What colour suit did Santa Claus wear until Coca Cola rebranded him in red?
14. What colour are Mistletoe berries?
15. What is the real name of the department store featured in Miracle On 34th Street?
16. What decoration do Elves traditionally have on their shoes?
17. What fruit is traditionally put in Christmas stockings?
18. What type of tree is most commonly used for Christmas Trees?
19. What is the opening line to Shakin Stevens song "Merry Christmas Everyone"?
20. Which British Monarch broadcast the first ever Christmas message?

What am I?



**The Hubble
Space
Telescope**



**Victorian
Teas Maid**

May the spirit of Christmas
infuse your life and that
of your family members
with hope, positivity,
and joy.
Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year.



“

Christmas is a time for family, food and fellowship. Wishing you nothing but the best that the season has to offer.”

womans day

ONE NIGHT A VIKING NAMED RUDOLPH THE RED WAS LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW WHEN HE SAID, "IT'S GOING TO RAIN."

HIS WIFE ASKED, "HOW DO YOU KNOW?"

"BECAUSE RUDOLPH THE RED KNOWS RAIN, DEAR."



*Thanks to everyone for
your support during
2022, especially those
who contributed articles
jokes etc.*

*Wishing you a very
happy Christmas and a
prosperous New Year*