

# NEWSLETTER



## NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUD CLUB



### March 2023

#### Message from our Chairman

What a month February has been. To start with there was Richard's funeral and then only two weeks later Jane died, her funeral being held on the 24<sup>th</sup> February. Such a dreadful time for the family and again our sincere condolences go out to them. Sadly Beryl Denby then died and her funeral was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> February. Beryl was an active member of the investment club and we should also remember that her late husband Tony was chairman for two terms, 2001/2 and 2008/9.

The club has now settled into the new year with good attendances both at the meetings and also at the club lunches. There was a skittles event held on the 28<sup>th</sup> February which was enjoyed by all those there although I am sorry to report that the bowls have got heavier since our last skittles evening pre COVID. Again our thanks to Chris for arranging this. The only social events in addition to our meetings over the next few months will be the pub lunches and I hope that they will continue to be supported as well as at present.

As an aside, I have always regarded the 1<sup>st</sup> March as the start of Spring and so in anticipation of flowering camellias, magnolias and all the other late winter/spring flowers Jenny and I took off to Cornwall for a few days. According to Fraser Cornwall is "God's Country", but I think any Yorkshiremen among us would have something to say about that. We enjoyed the visit, but it was cold and consequently the flowers were held back by a few weeks.

Best wishes to you all and enjoy another Spring as it unfolds.

Andrew



**PUB LUNCH**

## **The Trumpet Inn**

**7 MARCH 2023**

**Trumpet, Nr Ledbury HR8 2RA**

Organiser: Andrew Graham



**14 MARCH 2023**

**Philip Bowen**

## **The decline of the Aristocracy and the Stately Home**

Stately homes cost a lot of money to run and required a lot of staff. After World War 1 the economic landscape changed meaning that the staffing costs of running stately homes became unaffordable. Many of the staff who used to work in stately homes found they could get better paid jobs in factories. Other socio-economic changes occurred during the early 20th century which resulted stately homes becoming less and less affordable and the families who owned them began to dispose of them.



**28 MARCH 2023**

**Pamela Holland**

**“Tales of a Holiday Rep”**

A holiday representative, or rep, is responsible for looking after groups of clients on package holidays at resorts.

Your main priority is to ensure that clients enjoy their holiday and that everything runs as smoothly as possible for them. As the public face of the tour operator, you must create an excellent first impression and continue to provide outstanding service to holidaymakers throughout the duration of their stay.

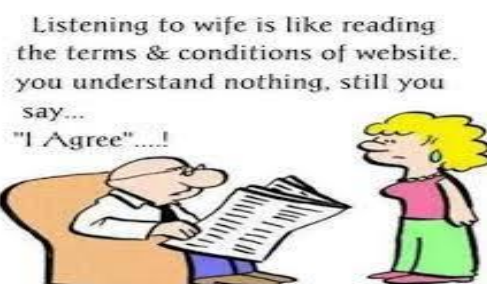
The role involves holding welcome meetings, handling complaints and resolving problems as they arise.

**Members enjoying our first Pub lunch of the year at the Weston Cross Inn at Weston-under-Penyard, a very successful event organised by Andrew.**



**20 of our members tucking to “HUGE” portions, great food, great company**

**One day you'll find someone that is obsessed with you. It's probably going to be a dog, but it is what it is.**



## GRANDAD'S EXCURSION INTO THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

My grandchildren could never understand how I had survived to my present great age without recourse to Facebook . I had resisted all their blandishments to join plus offers of liberal free tuition in the arcane mysteries of "social media". Until one day that is when I spotted an unfamiliar logo lurking on my computer screen.

Yes it was that dreaded F word and, unable to bear my deprivation any longer, they had surreptitiously (aka "sneakily") installed it

"Go on Grandad" they urged "in a few days you will wonder how you managed without it"

Well, those few days stretched into weeks then months with no discernible change in either my physical or mental state – none that I am admitting to anyway; I became no richer and my daily intake of tablets was unchanged.

And then – an epiphany. A friend, "The" friend in fact, told me that the Severn side village where I lived happily during adolescence and beyond, had a "page" on this new-fangled thingy, where one could post memories and long forgotten events.

The grand kids were only too pleased to enrol me as a member, delighted that "...grandad had seen the light at last"

Sure enough, on the page(s) was a cornucopia of memories and, after much thought. I resolved to input my "tuppence" worth. The memories came flooding back and some people even commented on the characters and places that I had written about. But then I realised that none of my would-be subjects had actually replied and when I asked one respondent "Are you any relation to X who lived next door to Y" back came the reply "Yes, he was my grandfather!

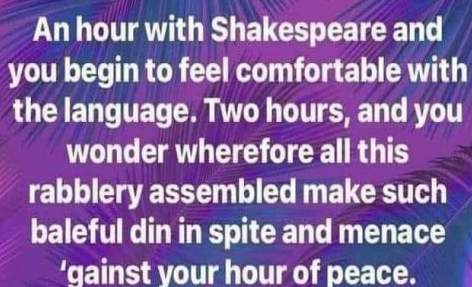
Yes, the world had moved on. My contemporaries, who I had hoped to make contact with, had long passed and sometimes their children too. If I wanted to contact them. it would not be in this world and my readership, such as it was , was their grandchildren Suddenly I felt old and tired and wondered where the years had gone.

I signed off , saying *tempus fugit* only for one irate reader to berate me for using obscene language.

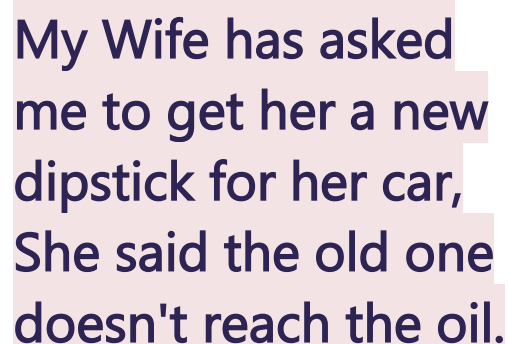
*Sic transit gloria* indeed.\*

\* And no, it does not mean that Gloria suffers from car sickness

Peter Hayes



An hour with Shakespeare and you begin to feel comfortable with the language. Two hours, and you wonder wherefore all this rabblery assembled make such baleful din in spite and menace 'gainst your hour of peace.



My Wife has asked me to get her a new dipstick for her car, She said the old one doesn't reach the oil.



## Plain Sailing – The secret story of RAF Saul



Boats at Saul at RAF Saul



Wycliffe College Boat House

Our speaker, Paul Barnett of Wotton under Edge Historical Society opened our eyes to some little known wartime facts about the quiet Cotswold village of Saul when it played host to a large number of high speed launches belonging to the Royal Air Force Marine Craft Section (MCS).

To put this into perspective, Paul outlined the formation of the RAF after WW1 and the resulting need for a marine craft section.

The RAF was founded on 1 April 1918, by merging the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service. At this time, the RAF saw flying boats as the way ahead and for this reason, needed an organisation to look after the various tenders, tugs, ferry and rescue boats. There was an inevitable battle between the RAF and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS), who saw anything to do with the sea as their province. Eventually, the RNAS transferred 323 vessels, most of which were found to be unserviceable!

This led the RAF to investigate their own development of suitable boats with several companies including such companies as the British Power Boat Company (BPBC) and Vosper Thornycroft.

During the inter-war years, the MCS had 150 vessels limited to a maximum speed of 10 knots. In 1927, the BPBC produced 'Miss England 1' which took the World Water Speed record of 91 mph in 1929. Based on this experience, they went on to design and manufacture 200 29ft vessels with a maximum speed of 29kt, and it was interesting to note that T.E.Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) volunteered as a 'Test Pilot' during this period, having seen downed airmen drown through lack of suitable rescue facilities. Developments continued with performance reaching 45kt and a range of 600 miles in 1943. Because the rescue service provided by the Royal Navy was uncoordinated with rescue launches being base on the North Sea coast, control of the service was transferred in 1941 from the Navy to the RAF Coastal Command, motto 'The Sea Shall Not Have Them'.

Much of the information comes from the recollections of Ex-Flight Sergeant Eric Blackman who, with a colleague were posted to an RAF maintenance unit (62 MU) based at Tewkesbury when they were issued with a new tender and instructed to find their way to Saul on the Severn at the junction with the Stroudwater Canal. Their first task was to requisition Wycliffe College Boathouse and to reclaim a short stretch of the Stroudwater Canal in readiness for the arrival of several High Speed Launches for storage afloat. mined, and convenient for West Coast ports.

The Stroudwater proved an ideal secure hideaway for the craft being very convenient for replacements to the busy SE coast bases which were sometimes shot up or mined, and convenient for West Coast ports. The base rapidly expanded until Operation Overlord in June 1944 with a total of 43 boats of various types but mostly high speed rescue launches. In December 1944, the unit was closed.

It would appear that this episode in the life of the village of Saul has been a closely-guarded secret akin to the secrecy surrounding the activities of Bletchley Park. Secrecy as evidenced by the fact that a member of our club, who grew up there, had never heard of the Unit"

Paul's excellent talk was well illustrated and included a number of interesting anecdotes covering such things as finding enough food to supply boats at short notice, innovative ways of unloading boats from transporters using undersized cranes and improvising ways to refuel.

One of our members recognised the first picture of Saul as the place where he had lived, and another member recalled the occasion when on duty in Gibraltar he had the opportunity to go on a high-speed run on a High speed Launch based there.

John Martin



**NEWENT LAKE**



**STONEHINGE !**

**WHERE WAS I ?**



**Members enjoying our Skittles evening.  
Thanks to Chris Johnson for a fun evening.**

## **MORE DEVIOUS DEALINGS IN THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT**

Through illness, our guest speaker advised us at short notice that he could not make today's meeting and Mike Warburton stood in with an impromptu talk on some of the stories he had written articles on or had input into mainly for the Times or Telegraph.



He started explaining that Nadhim Zahawi, then chancellor of the exchequer, MP for Stratford – on - Avon, when caught out for tax irregularities explained that he made a simple error on his tax return. Mike explained that this turned out to be a full-scale tax avoidance. The sale proceeds of his share of his company, “YouGov” went to a shell company, naming his father as owner. Then he received a loan from that company thus avoiding Tax. He managed to negotiate a soft deal with HMRC, paying £5million, which included a modest fine.



Dame Margaret Hodge (née Oppenheimer) MP

Labour MP for Barking

Following a question from the floor, Mike moved on to Margaret Hodge MP who as Head of Public Accounts Committee, slated people, like the chief Exec of HSBC, who sent money through Shell companies in Panama and Liechtenstein, to take money in the form of loans without paying tax. Investigation by Mike and others showed that she had received money from her family's company "Stemcor" in the same way. When her lawyers censored the newspaper and the journalist, who Mike was working with, the story was held back. Eventually a radio 5 interviewer got her to confess and she resigned from the public accounts committee and did not stand as a MP at the next election.



HM Revenue  
& Customs

Mike then talked about various tax avoidance schemes that came unstuck, ending with the HMRC's handling of the IR35 issue. Where for many years, they took no action on tax schemes, giving the impression they were happy it wasn't illegal, then forcing the government, who were in need of raising more tax, to bring in retrospective legislation and to backdate their decision that it was illegal, causing many bankruptcies and 10 suicides. Mike said that he thought it was the most terrible and immoral act he had ever witnessed..

Lively questions followed and the meeting ended with thanks to Mike

Chris Lathan



## SOME SILLIES

Sconeheenge.



I said to my golf coach 'I think. I'm standing too close to the ball when I hit it'. He said 'no you're standing too close to it after you've hit it'!

The inventor of the Morse code has sadly passed away. Dashes to dashes dots to

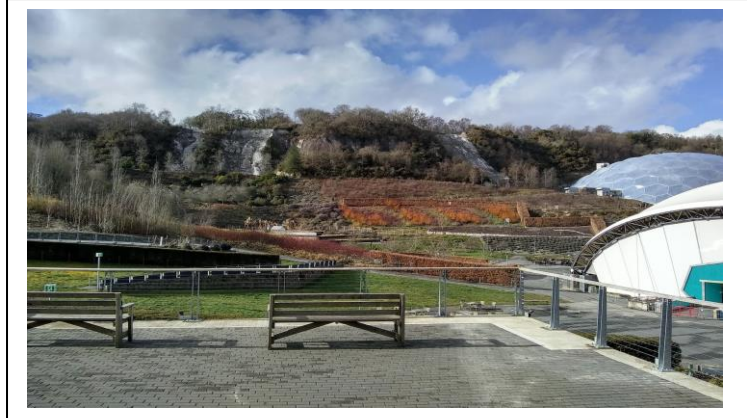


I wonder if acupuncture can cure pins and needles !

I've just taken my library book, The History of Clocks' back to the library. The librarian said, 'It's about time'



Where am I ?



**Thanks to all those who  
submitted articles and helped  
with the production.  
Ed**



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