



# NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

## NEWSLETTER



## SEPTEMBER 2023

### MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Where has the Summer gone, now nearly into September. The nights are drawing in fast. The garden has been most productive, loads of runner beans, courgettes, and tomatoes. I have all my potatoes dug up and in store, should keep us going until Christmas.

Have spoken to Yvonne, to enquire how John Slack is progressing, no real change and he is now in Cirencester Hospital. I passed on our best wishes to him

The next pub lunch is on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September at The Farmers Arms, Apperley, organised by Julia Atkinson.

I will be away for our first meeting in September, as we are away on holiday to Ireland. We take our two Labradors with us, and, they have both completed their health checks, enabling them to travel with us. Hoping to be back for the second meeting. We arrive back in Fishguard in the early hours of that morning and Andrew Graham is on standby if I don't make it back in time.

Have been busy with Parish Council duties this month. The Probation Service, Community Payback, have been doing various projects for us around the village. Painting, grass cutting and cleaning the play area in the Parish Hall grounds. They will be back in October to do some more painting and tidying up.

Enjoy September and let's hope for an Indian Summer.

Best wishes

Mike



**SPEAKER**

**TUESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**Lyn Hilditch**

**Women in a man's world,  
Air Traffic Controllers**

a scammer called my grandma  
and said he had all her  
passwords

she got a pen and paper and said  
'thank god for that, what are  
they'



**We must all do our bit  
for the planet.  
I just unplugged a row  
of electric cars, that no  
one was using.**



**SPEAKER**

**TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**CORA WEAVER**

**SPOUTS & FOUNTAINS OF THE  
MALVERN HILLS**



Stanford University has identified a host of [words and phrases it wants to do away with](#) as part of its “**elimination of harmful language initiative**”.

After 18 months engaging with “stakeholder groups”, has unveiled the results of its labours. The guide’s targets include “ableist” language that “devalues people who live with disabilities”. So, a “**blind study**” – which “furthers an ableist culture” - becomes a “**masked study**”. Similarly, a person can no longer be described as “**tone deaf**” because it trivialises disabilities. Unenlightened, however, is acceptable.

The university first revealed the plan and wants to remove the words from its websites and IT systems.

The guide outlaws **13 words and phrases** for being “**culturally appropriative**” – misusing terms with particular significance to groups such as Native Americans.

Thus, the phrase “**bury the hatchet**” is excised because it appropriates “a centuries-old tradition among some North American indigenous peoples”. It should be replaced by “**call a truce**”.

Similarly, a “**pow wow**” becomes a “**get together**” and a “**guru**” an “**expert**”, to avoid negating a word seen as a sign of respect in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions.

More than 30 terms are deemed sexist, including “**seminal**”, which the university said reinforces “male-dominated language” and should be replaced by “**ground-breaking**”.

**Trans people become “non-gendering conforming folk”.**

More than 30 terms are deemed to denote “institutionalised racism”.

**An aircraft’s black box** – which “assigns negative connotations to the colour black” must instead be referred to as a “**mystery box**” or “**flight recorder**”.

*Not sure why it was called “Black Box” as its Yellow or Bright Orange!*

**Terms deemed violent and potentially upsetting**

Seemingly anodyne terms and phrases were deemed violent and potentially upsetting.

“**Killing two birds with one stone**” was deemed to be an expression that normalises violence against animals, as was “**beating a dead horse**”.

Even “**rule of thumb**” appears to have fallen foul of the university’s initiative, because it refers to “**an old British law that allowed men to beat their wives with sticks no wider than their thumb**”.

Such is the university’s determination to avoid causing offence to anyone, even the guide was released with a content warning.

**“This website contains language that is offensive or harmful,” it says. “Please engage with this website at your own pace”**



## MERCY SHIPS

On 8 August Sheila Pugh gave us a comprehensive talk on the work of the Mercy Ships.

She defined “mercy” as doing something good for somebody who hasn’t done anything to deserve it. The Ships are operated across the world, for free, relying on volunteers to give medical help to those in need. The volunteers even pay board and lodging for staying on the Ships and give their time, money and expertise for nothing. In 1978 Mercy Ships was born as a global charity. A Dr Stevens from the USA had met Mother Teresa and was so inspired that he sourced the first ship and started the charity. He is still with the ships and attended Princess Anne’s launch of the newest ship in May 23.

40 countries provide the personnel, with English as the working language. If the patients are not English speakers then translators are provided. Some of the staff are seconded for free by employers such as Rolls Royce (engineers) and Stena (kitchen hands). Others are simply volunteers spending from 2 weeks to sometimes a few years on the Ships. The most senior specialists tend to stay for the shortest periods. A wide range of staff is required in addition to medical personnel, and there are even school teachers on board for the children of the staff.

Originally the charity helped when disasters occurred near coasts, including earthquakes and volcano eruptions, but these days the Ships spend most of their time along the West African coast. The original ship was the Africa Mercy which was converted from a train ferry, but really a purpose built ship was required. After great support from Rotary International a new ship was built to order and launched earlier this year. The Global Mercy, which has been fully funded, has allowed the number of operations to double but it does need more staff. In the meantime Africa Mercy has been refitted in South Africa and is now with Global Mercy in West Africa. Donations, and legacies in wills raise a significant slice of income.

The Ships also have a mission to train local medics to the latest standards. This training helps catch problematic conditions much earlier when they are easier to treat. Apart from training and mentoring, the Ships reduce the surgical backlog in the area and help to renovate and improve local healthcare facilities.

The Ships are a very efficient way to bring aid. They are totally self-sufficient and have a desalination plant. They carry tents, Land-Rovers and a wide range of equipment, and vast quantities of food – although they shop locally where they can. As 50% of the world’s population lives within 50 miles of a port city they have an impressive reach and offer a very wide range of medical services, including dentistry. They stay moored for up to ten months at a time and set up fixed and mobile clinics on land whilst they are there

The medical interventions can have extensive results, such as where a simple operation for an obstetric fistula not only transforms the life of the individual patient but also those of her family and relatives as she is no longer shunned as a result of cultural issues. Even if patients cannot be helped with operations as a result of their age, the Ships will make palliative care arrangements so that they can spend the end of their life with as much dignity as possible.

Sheila then showed us some striking and moving photos of some of the patients who had been helped by the Ships, showing both how they presented originally, and then how they looked after treatment. These covered cleft palates, huge abscesses, burns injuries and seriously bowed legs. There was even the story of Ardana who was blind and had given birth to twins, but whose blindness was cured by a cataract operation. Although the Ships do not treat cancers or other ongoing diseases they clearly make huge difference to the communities they treat.

Sheila urged us to spread the word about mercy ships and to contribute if we could either in financial terms or even by volunteering if we were still fit enough.

She emphasised how volunteering for such a good cause was so satisfying, and how Mahatma Gandhi had summed it up:

*“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”.*

John Wærdøen

A man is admitted to Accident & Emergency by ambulance with burns to his lower extremities. His shoes are charred and the bottoms of his pants are burnt away, but his skin isn't too bad. It would appear that had been using a Propane Weed Burner and things got a little out of hand.

The doctor smelled alcohol on his breath and asked him if he had been drinking.

The man looked at him with blurry eyes and said in a slurred way “Noooooo”.

The doctor felt drunk just standing by him.

The doctor felt that this was a once in a lifetime set up and couldn't help himself.

As straight faced and professionally as possible as he could he said “Sir...Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire”

The Paramedics all turned at once and ran out of the room laughing hysterically.

The man looked at the doctor with a confused stare.

He was so drunk it went right over his head.



## The Cotswolds and the work of Volunteer Workers

“England’s green and pleasant land”. Nothing typifies England more than the words of William Blake, to Hubert Parry’s immortal song Jerusalem. Indeed many say that it should be our national Anthem, while a significant few say that Blake had the Cotswolds in mind when he penned them. Be that as it may, the fact that so many recognise the Cotswolds from that description is no accident. We heard this and more from John Heathcott, a volunteer Cotswold warden on his recent talk.

Yes the area has many natural advantages; the Jurassic stone outcrop on which the area is built is durable yet a natural building stone which weathers to a variety of attractive colours, its wealth, derived from its wool from the Cotswold Lion sheep, which are so at home here on the undulating countryside which man could never hope to re-create. There are many claimants to be God’s own country but the Cotswolds is high on the list.

And yes, innate beauty but we only have to think of our own gardens if, having had them landscaped professionally, we then leave it to God to look after them, who has many qualities, but gardening is not one of them. No, and this is where the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens enter the picture. Without them the countless footpath trails could be overgrown, the distinctive dry stone walls could have largely crumbled .

Typical of these is John, whose talk featured the activities of these 400 or so volunteers but first, perhaps it is necessary to explain just what the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is – or isn’t.

Firstly it is not a Theme Park. It is a working community and not some Disneyland creation, supporting agriculture, industry and of course tourism. Comprising some 800 square miles it excludes urban areas such as Bath and Cheltenham. Strict planning regulations protect its environment while it has extensive facilities for leisure and recreation and now it is to be given National Park status.

Obviously all this costs money and the AONB gets its income from a variety of sources. Principal of these is the national government, e.g. DEFRA while the constituent county councils also help as do other local authorities.

What then does a Cotswold warden do? As John described, various small teams, under the supervision of a leader, carry out such diverse tasks as dry stone walling, footpath maintenance, hedging and much more.

The wardens also run an extensive programme of guided walks throughout the county. As well as a means of gaining some healthy exercise, there is also the chance to learn more about the area as all the guides are fully trained and are a fund of local knowledge. It is probably unfair to single out one feature when there are so many outstanding ones to choose from but if a choice has to be made then surely the Cotswold Way is deserving. Running roughly north west to south east across the counties it is some 100 miles long. Starting (or finishing) in glorious Chipping Camden and ending in another gem, that of Bath. Taking in along the way the scenery and buildings for the AONB is justifiably famous. A smaller than usual attendance, due to holidays and sickness, members asked John many questions and showed their appreciation for such an informative talk in the usual way.

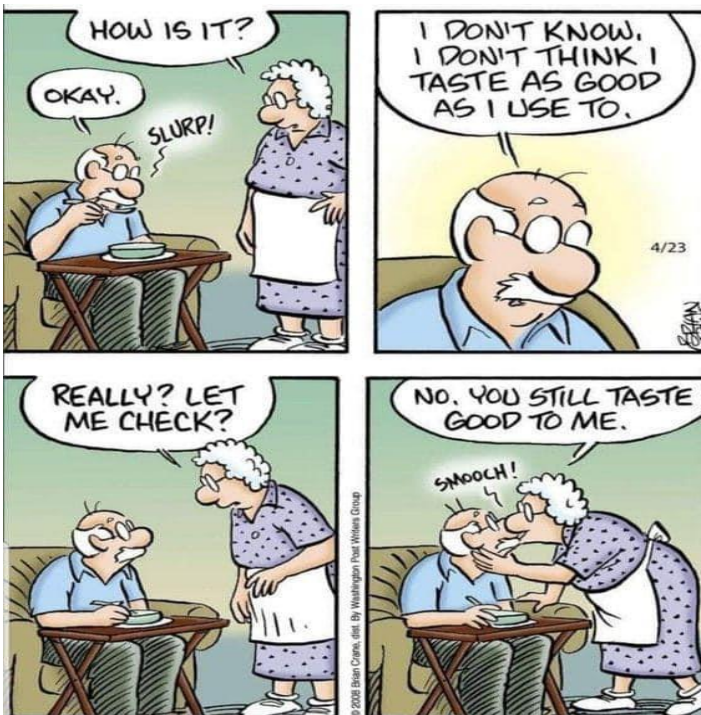
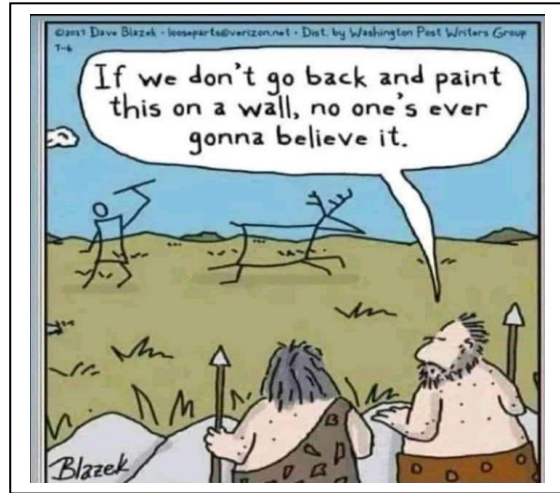
*Peter Hayes*



### **FATAL BEAT**

Before taking up the lightweight baton, conductors beat time by banging a large wooden staff on the floor. The first fatality of a conductor occurred in 1687, when the distinguished French musician Jean-Baptiste Lully, no doubt overcome by the momentousness of the occasion -accidentally thumped the staff on his toe while conducting a Te Deum to celebrate King Louis XIV's recovery from illness. The consequent abscess on his toe turned gangrenous and within two months Lully was dead.

Apparently there are 2 types of flu. The harmless one that women and children get, and the "near death" version that men get.



Oxford's Word of the Week:

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

**Crapulous**

(18th Century)

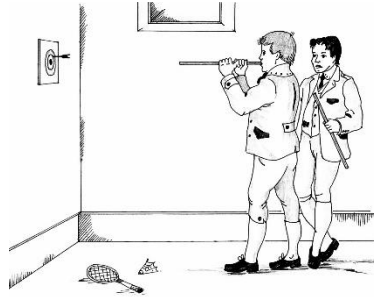
*Suffering from the ill-effects of too much drinking*

#OxfordWOTW

Where am I ?





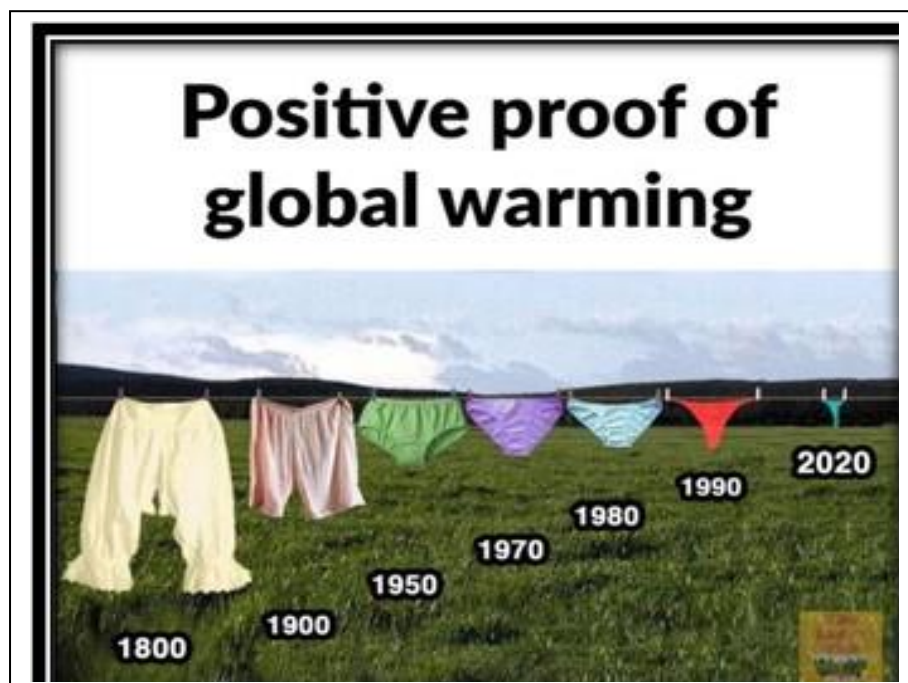


### ***“Puff and Dart”***

The first confirmed reference to the game of darts comes from 1819. It was then known as *“Puff and Dart”* because the missile was not thrown, as today, but launched by a blowpipe. As careless (or *tipsy*) players occasionally sucked rather than blew, thereby swallowing the dart with often fatal consequences. This form of the game eventually died out, unsurprisingly

### TEA

For those who like legends, the first cup of tea is said to have been consumed in 2737BC by Emperor Shennong of China, when he sipped boiled water into which leaves of the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) had accidentally blown.



## CLASSY INSULTS



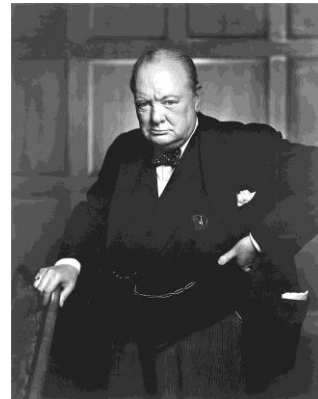
*A member of Parliament to Disraeli:* "Sir, you will either die on the gallows, or of some unspeakable disease."  
· "That depends, Sir," said Disraeli, "whether I embrace your policies or your mistress."



**His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork.**  
*Mae West*



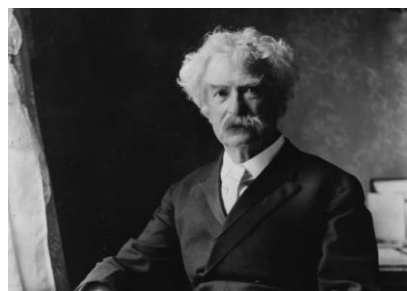
**"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go."**  
*Oscar Wilde*



**He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire."**  
*Winston Churchill*



**"He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others."**  
*Samuel Johnson*



**"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it."**  
*Mark Twain*

**The kids keep laughing about my memory. They won't be laughing at Christmas when there's no eggs under the tree!**

**It's good to be aware of the difference between the two...**



**A British Bee**



**A US Bee**

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



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