

NEWSLETTER



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUD CLUB



FEBRUARY 2024

Message from our Chairman

Goodbye January and hello February. Hopefully we have seen the last of the storms of late, although February can be unpredictable, and we are not completely out of the woods yet. The days are getting longer and it's time for me to think about the garden. I have purchased my first crop of seed potatoes, I like the variety Rocket, I have them chitting in the utility room and plan to plant them on or around St Patricks Day. They really do rocket and usually we have new potatoes by the end of May. I have planted my tomato seeds and have noticed this morning they have just started to germinate. I have them on the dining room windowsill, which is south facing.

I missed our first meeting of the year, but really enjoyed David Keen & Frank Skilbeck – “The Art of Making and Flying Large Model Aircraft”.

When I arrived at the hall, I could not believe the size of the model. It took up a considerable space on the hall floor.

Thanks to Fraser for organising the quiz and congratulations to the winning team. John Weeden has organised a Skittles Evening for February, which I am looking forward to.

Chris Lathan has kindly agreed to arrange the February pub lunch for the Club, at The Mill Race, Walford.

Take care and keep warm.

Best wishes

Mike

Yippee! PUB LUNCHESES ARE BACK



6 FEBRUARY 2024

The Mill Race, Walford, nr Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5QS

12.30 for 1pm

PUB LUNCHESES FOR 2024



DATE	LOCATION	ORGANISER
6 FEBRUARY	The Mill Race, Walford, Ross on Wye	Chris Lathan
5 MARCH	Weston Cross, Weston- under-Penyard	Chris Lathan
2 APRIL	TBC	Andrew Graham
7 MAY	Walwyn Arms, Much Marcle	Julia Atkinson
4 JUNE	TBC	Paul Dodd



SPEAKER

TUESDAY 13 FEBRUARY

Andrew Mellor



Poppies amongst the Daffodils –The Dymock Poets

The Dymock poets were a literary group of the early 20th century who made their homes near the village of Dymock in Gloucestershire in the period between 1911 and 1914.

The 'Dymock Poets' are generally held to have comprised Robert Frost, Lascelles Abercrombie, Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson and John Drinkwater,

The Soldier - written by Rupert Brooke

The poem is the fifth in a series of poems entitled *1914*. It was published in 1915 in the book *1914 and Other Poems*.

*If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.*

*And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.*



SPEAKER

TUESDAY 22 FEBRUARY

Nicole Beebee

Midlands Air Ambulance Charity



Midlands Air Ambulance Charity (MAAC) operates and funds three air ambulances covering six Midlands counties. Based at Cosford, Strensham and Tatenhill, covering Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands.

Its aim is to provide patients with outstanding pre-hospital care and lifesaving intervention through the operation of helicopter-led emergency medical services (HEMS) - we will continue to save more lives and improve survivors' quality of life through the provision of a comprehensive, transparent, clinical and operational helicopter led emergency service aligned to changing patient need and demand.

MAAC is an independent charity and healthcare provider that is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The aim of the CQC is to ensure patients can expect to receive the essential standards of quality while being treated by the MAAC team in the pre-hospital environment. At present, MAAC is waiting for its first CQC rating, which will be displayed publicly once received



Valentine's Day



A day for kindness
A day for smiles
A day for friendship
Across the miles

A day for sharing
A day for hugs
But most of all
A day for love



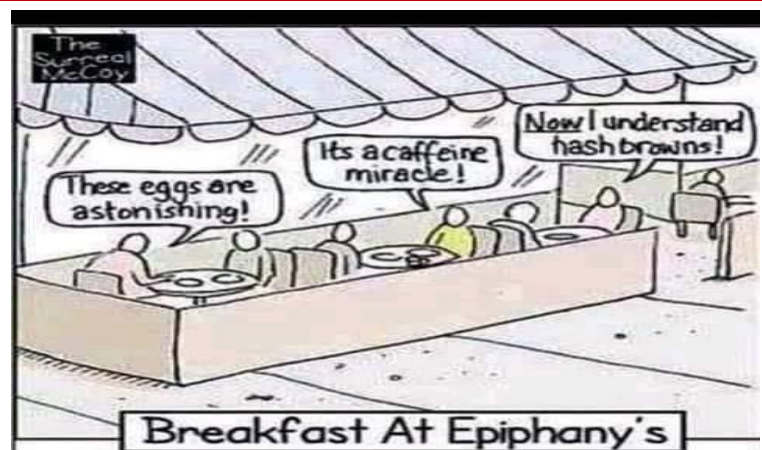
Dorothy Parker was an American poet, writer, critic, wit and satirist based in New York; she was known for her caustic wisecracks, and eye for 20th-century urban foibles

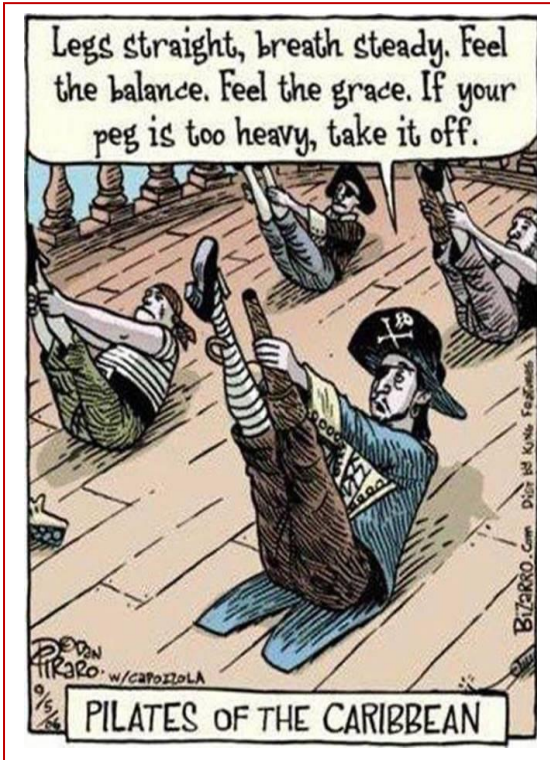
**I like to have a Martini -
Two at the very most.
After three, I'm under the table.
After four, I'm under the host**

I want to tell you about a girl who only eats plants.

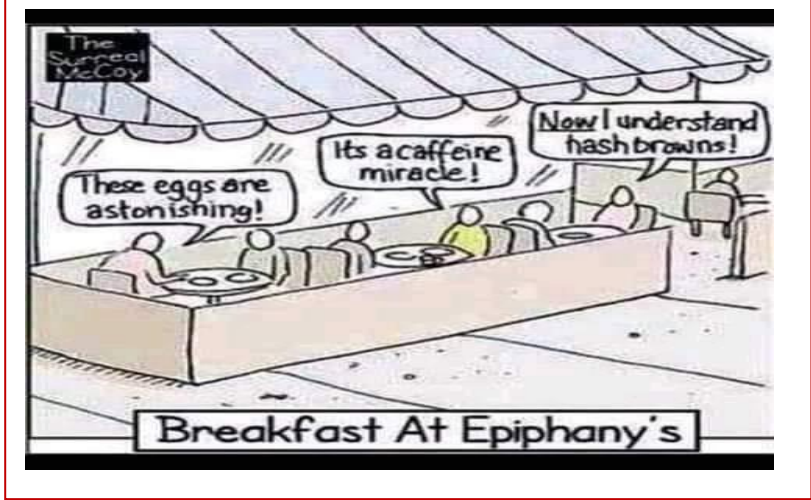
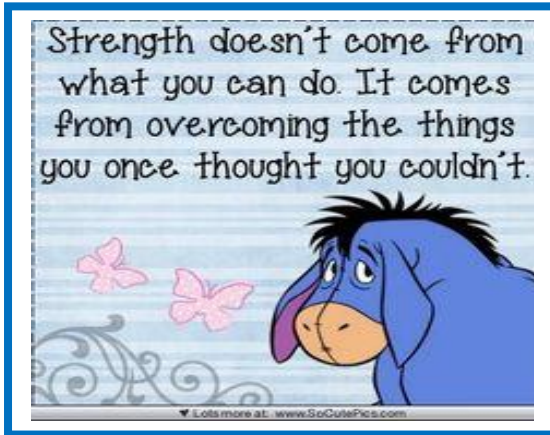


You've probably never heard of herbivore.





He stormed to his wife in the kitchen and announced. "From now on, you need to know that I am the man of this house and my word is Law. You will prepare me a gourmet meal tonight, and when I'm done eating my meal, you will serve me a scrumptious dessert. After dinner, you are going to go upstairs with me and we will have the kind of sex that I want' Afterwards, you are going to draw me a bath so I can relax. You will wash my back and towel me dry and bring me my robe. Then, you will massage my feet and hands. Then tomorrow, guess who's going to dress me and comb my hair?" The wife replied, "The funeral director would be my first guess."



THOUGHT FOR TODAY – and tomorrow

Please remember that when Artificial Intelligence (AI) is tipped as the answer to everything it also stands for Artificial Insemination

PHH

7 things that indicate you have Neanderthal DNA

So if you're not a fan of needles, does that mean you're a little bit Neanderthal? Not necessarily, and the only true way to find out is through a DNA test. Modern-day humans can have up to 4% Neanderthal DNA in their genes, more commonly people of European origin. And as scientists' understanding of the ancient genome increases, more and more modern traits are being traced back to the time when early humans, Homo sapiens, paired up with their cousins

- 1) You have a longer nose:** It's not a common consideration, the length of a nose rather than general size. However, it seems longer noses from top to bottom were advantageous for Neanderthals living in the colder climates of Europe a hundred thousand years ago, helping warm the frigid air before it reached the lungs
- 2) Bad skin:** Neanderthal DNA can leave individuals predisposed to developing skin lesions called keratoses, which are dry, scaly patches of skin caused by sun damage. Although not usually serious, there is a risk of the patches turning cancerous. Other disorders linked to the presence of Neanderthal DNA include diabetes, lupus and Crohn's disease
- 3) Fabulous hair:** Back to a positive. Everyone wants luscious, thick hair don't they? Well Neanderthal DNA makes that more likely, along with strong nails and skin. Some studies have also shown those with lovely thick, red hair may also be more likely to have Neanderthal DNA
- 4) You're more susceptible to Covid:** One less positive trait that has come to the fore in recent years is the risk of more severe Covid-19 infections in those with Neanderthal DNA, from a gene carried by around 16% of people in Europe
- 5) You're more resistant to bugs:** It works both ways, however, with some ancient genes giving modern humans increased resistance to other infections caused by bacteria, fungi and parasites. Unfortunately, this is also thought to have left some people more prone to allergies, which happen when the immune system overreacts to everyday substances, such as dust or pollen
- 6) You're a smoker** Yes, weirdly, having Neanderthal DNA is linked to a higher risk of tobacco addiction. Of course, given its use only became widespread 400 years ago, it's highly unlikely our ancestors were big smokers. As with all the negative effects of Neanderthal DNA that may leave you thinking 'no wonder they went extinct', the genes associated with them were likely behind a useful function at the time, but 100,000 or so years later, in the 21st century, they do not serve the same purpose
- 7) You're smart** And a final one. Not only were Neanderthals strong and healthy, they were smarter than often given credit for – and one of the genes that contributed, microcephalin, is thought to have contributed to Homo sapiens' massive brains.

Who wants to be a millionaire

Paddy is on his final question for a million pounds with Jeremy Clarkson, he has only one lifeline left”Phone a Friend”.

Jeremy asks him “Which bird does not make a nest?”

A- Sparrow, B- Swallow, C- Blackbird or D- Cuckoo? Paddy thinks for a moment and says “ I think I will ask a friend”.

Paddy calls Murphy. Murphy answers “ Be Jesus it’s a Cuckoo 100%. Paddy says Cuckoo and wins the 1 million pounds.

Afterwards Paddy rings Murphy to thank him and says “How on earth did you know that?” Murphy says “Well Paddy you thick twit, everyone knows it lives in a bleedin clock!”

CARD ANGUISH



Before Christmas becomes a distant memory and before you start on the first of those Easter Eggs please reflect on this.

Is there some sort of reverse arms race among the makers of Christmas cards to attempt to make the envelope and card an identical size.? I ask because every year their envelopes seem to shrink while the cards themselves seem to grow. It reminds me of those school girls who defy both school rules and parental dictate on the length of their school skirts and who hoick then up a couple of inches

This year it proved near impossible to insert the card into its envelope whilst extracting it involves tearing the envelope into several pieces. Or could it be that our hand/eye co-ordination isn’t what it was?

Is the solution to dispose with the envelope and to write the recipient’s address on the card itself, as with the more familiar seaside postcard?

Peter Hayes

Neville Chamberlain “Peace for our Time”- Buying Britain Time

Probus Meeting 9th January 2024



At its early January meeting Probus had the relatively unusual, and privileged, experience of a talk about a substantial historical figure by a speaker who was a direct descendant of that person.

Susan Humphrey is a granddaughter of Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister from 1937 to 1940 and who is mostly remembered for the Munich Agreement of 1938 and the pre-war period of appeasement of Hitler. In her talk, Susan sought to illustrate how much more there was to her grandfather and how the conventional view of him was the product of polemical writers and ill-informed hasty hindsight.

The Chamberlain Family

Susan began with an introduction to the wider Chamberlain family and particularly Neville’s father Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914), who is most associated with the municipal development of Birmingham as Mayor and then MP. Joseph was both a radical and an imperialist, defying the simple categorisation of politicians. As an advanced social reformer for his time, he promoted slum clearance, free public libraries and public housing for the poor in Birmingham and brought gas, water and sewage systems in Birmingham into municipal ownership. Nevertheless as a conservative patriot he became increasingly uncomfortable with the Liberal Party foreign and Home Rule for Ireland policies, leading him to transfer to the Conservative Party, reaching cabinet rank as colonial secretary.

Neville Chamberlain’s elder half-brother, Austin, was a conservative politician who held senior cabinet posts in the inter-war years and won the Nobel Peace Prize. He died in 1937. Neville Chamberlain’s two sisters also followed the family tradition of civic duty.

Social Reform and Domestic Politics

On leaving university Neville Chamberlain initially followed his father’s mercantile background, first as an apprentice accountant and then being sent to the Bahamas by his father to set up a sisal plantation. When that failed he moved back to the UK to manage a manufacturing company in Birmingham where he introduced pension schemes and employee profit sharing.

Although not at first interested in politics, after persuasion by his wife, Neville followed his father into that world, becoming Lord Mayor of Birmingham in 1915 during which he was instrumental in setting up the nation’s first municipal savings bank. In 1918 he was elected conservative MP for Birmingham Ladywood, soon joining the government. He became Minister of Health in the Baldwin government of 1924 to 1929, introducing 21 key pieces of legislation.

In 1931 he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer by Ramsey Macdonald in the National Government when he increased welfare spending though decreased spending on armaments. That policy was however reversed in 1935 as the perceived threat from Hitler’s Germany rose. On succeeding Ramsey Macdonald as Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin kept Neville Chamberlain as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister in 1937 on the resignation of Stanley Baldwin. In 1937, Chamberlain passed the Factories Act, and in 1938, the Holiday With Pay Act, Coal Act, and Housing Act, all of which aimed at improving working conditions and effectively saw more social security and legislation to create safer, better working and living conditions for many people. Other social reform and domestic policy that had been discussed was shelved following the outbreak of war in 1939.

Appeasement

In foreign affairs, by 1937, European politics were becoming increasingly strained: Spain was already engulfed in a brutal civil war. Under Adolf Hitler, Germany was rearming – breaking the terms of the Treaty of Versailles – and Chamberlain did his best to reconcile with Germany rather than to openly condemn Hitler's policy. Chamberlain was unwilling to go down in history as responsible for an inevitably destructive war, without first doing everything possible to prevent it. Chamberlain, as with many in Europe who had witnessed the horrors of the First World War and its aftermath, was dedicated to restoring peace if at all possible.

In her presentation, Susan Humphrey sought to challenge the conventional view that her grandfather was weak and naïve in foreign affairs. She reminded us that avoidance of war with Germany (only later described as 'appeasement') was a very popular policy of the time and there was widespread agreement that Germany had been treated badly by the terms of the Versailles Treaty.

The Munich Crisis

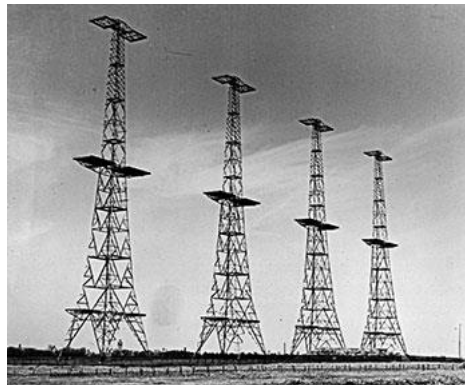
In 1938, after having forcibly taken over Austria in March, Hitler demanded annexation of the Sudetenland, the ethnically German border area of Czechoslovakia, into his 'Greater Germany'. In addressing the issue Chamberlain was much affected by the unwillingness of the French to fulfil their treaty obligations towards the Czechs.

Chamberlain met Hitler in Munich in September that year, the result of which was an agreement that Britain and Germany would never again go to war. He declared on his return to the UK "I believe it is peace for our time" (often misquoted as '...in our time') and this was at the time widely hailed as a triumph. However, the success of 'appeasement' was short-lived, as Hitler occupied Prague the following year.



In common with some more recent revisionist historians, Susan Humphrey argued that her grandfather was not motivated by a simple desire for peace at any cost and nor was he duped by Hitler. Rather she argued that Chamberlain was well aware of the unpreparedness of Britain for war despite the increase in rearmament spending from 1935 instituted by him as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Nor were the Commonwealth Dominion countries ready for war.

Rather, following the Munich Crisis rearmament was further accelerated. Susan drew our attention to the growth in fighter production facilitated substantially from 1938 onwards under the Chamberlain administration. Given the lead times for setting up production lines, had that not happened, insufficient aircraft would have been available in 1940 for the winning of the Battle of Britain. Furthermore a Ministry of Supply was created, the size of the Territorial Army doubled, and peace conscription instituted. The initial 'home chain' of radar stations was able to become fully operational on 3rd September 1939, the date of the Declaration of War.



War

Following Hitler's invasion of more of Czechoslovakia (Bohemia and Moravia, including Prague) in March 1939 Chamberlain set out to build an interlocking series of defence pacts among the remaining European countries as a means of deterring Hitler from war. On 31 March 1939, Chamberlain informed an approving House of Commons of British and French guarantees that they would lend Poland all possible aid in the event of any action which threatened Polish independence. In the ensuing debate, Eden stated that the nation was now united behind the government. Even Churchill and Lloyd George praised Chamberlain's government for issuing the guarantee to Poland.

Germany invaded Poland in the early morning of 1 September 1939. Britain declared war on Germany on 3rd September and Chamberlain set up a War Cabinet that included Winston Churchill. The so called 'phoney war' lasted till April 1940 when Germany invaded Denmark and Norway. The British and French campaign to resist the Germans in Norway was unsuccessful, plagued by poor logistics as well as tactical and operational errors. Withdrawal was ordered on 26 April.

The House of Commons adjournment debate for the Whitsun recess on 7th and 8th May was effectively turned into a confidence debate on the leadership of Chamberlain and it came to be known as 'the Norway Debate'. Those opposing Chamberlain, not just opposition MPs but also a core group of influential conservative MPs, expressed their discontent with the conduct of the war by the Cabinet up to that date, expressing the view that military activity had been too cautious and, other than the unsuccessful Norway campaign, too passive.

Although the government won the vote at the end of the debate, 38 government aligned MPs voted against and some 20 abstained. In the light of that rebellion Chamberlain initially tried to bring Labour into a broad coalition government but when Labour refused to serve under him he resigned and advised the King to ask Winston Churchill to be Prime Minister and form such a government.

Chamberlain remained leader of the Conservative Party and Churchill kept him both in the full Cabinet and in the small War Cabinet. By July 1940 Chamberlain was in considerable pain, resigning from the cabinet in September 1940 and dying from colon cancer on 9th November 1940 aged 71.

Legacy and Reputation

Following his resignation as Prime Minister an anonymous polemic '*The Guilty Men*' was published criticising the pre-war Chamberlain Government, asserting it failed adequately to prepare for war and, notwithstanding its popularity at the time, criticising the outcome of the Munich crisis. Further critical writings soon followed.

Susan Humphrey observed that the authors of the polemic, and other writers, at that time had no access to the Cabinet papers which were only released in the late 1960s. These, she says, reveal that Chamberlain was aware of the threat of Hitler and had said that "war will come, but in time of our choosing".

Susan observed that, though critical of Chamberlain in his post-war writings, Winston Churchill did say "History has not been kind to Neville Chamberlain".

In recent times there have been both revisionist (pro Chamberlain) and post revisionist (critical of Chamberlain) historians. Most, in whatever camp, focus on his foreign policies but, in the view of the author of this article, if one looks at his record as a domestic politician, it is impressive and in many ways laid the foundations for the post-war welfare state. Were he remembered for his domestic policies and reforms he could well have been considered a successful 20th century prime minister.

Nigel Johnson

**If you see me
talking to
myself, just
move along...
I'm self
employed.
We're having a
staff meeting.**

It's all about grammar

The owner of a Monumental Masons received the following telephone call:

"Hello, I would like to order a headstone for my recently departed husband"

"Certainly, what would you liked inscribed?"

"Erected in the memory of John Ernest Price who was tragically drowned in the Bridgwater Canal by his loving family"

"Ah! I think we might need to reword that?"

Did we really complain about decimalisation?

POUNDS , SHILLINGS AND PENCE

Two farthings would make a ha'penny

Two ha'pennies a penny for you.

Three pennies would come to
threepence

or a threepenny bit as we knew it.

Six pennies would make up sixpence,
two three penny bits did as well.

All were known as a tanner,
as any old timer would tell.

Twelve pennies were worth one
shilling,

four threepenny bits, two tanners a
bob

Four tanners eight threepence two
shillings.

All would make a florin job

Two and six or a florin and sixpence
would become half a crown

Four half crowns made a ten bob
note.

Two ten bob notes a pound

A pound note and a shilling into a
guinea grew.

This is old money pounds shillings
and pence.

I remember it well. Do you?

I finally did it!

Bought a new pair of
shoes with memory
foam insoles.

No more forgetting
why I walked into
the kitchen.



A wealthy man was having an affair with an Italian woman for a few years.

One night during a date she announced that she was pregnant.

Not wishing to ruin his reputation or his marriage, he offered the woman a large sum of money if she would go back to Italy to have the child. If she agreed to stay in Italy, he would provide child support until the child was 18.

She agreed, but wondered how he would know when the baby was born.

To keep it discrete he said "She should send him a postcard and write "Spaghetti" on the back."

He would then arrange for the child support to be paid.

One day about 9 months later, he arrived home to a very confused wife.

"Darling", she said, "You have just received a very strange postcard today"

"Oh, just give it to me, I will explain later" he said. She handed the card to her husband and watched as he read it, went white and fainted.

On the card was written "Spaghetti, Spaghetti, Spaghetti. Two with meatballs and one without!"



A QUIZZICAL EVENING

There is much, much more to your Probus club than the regular club meetings, enjoyable and informative as they are.

Outings to local, and not so local, places of interest, monthly pub lunches, which are often at quirky relatively unknown locations, theatre visits, (now, alas, curtailed by the aftermath of Covid) and quizzes, to name just some.

A good example of the latter took place last month at our regular venue, the King's Arms in Newent, when 28 members wives and partners or just friends, joined forces to battle out a test of brains and, more often, memory against a set of devious questions set by our genial quizmaster Fraser, taking a night off from arranging our programme of speakers.

It proved to be an evening of "what we didn't know rather than one of " what we knew" to quote one puzzled entrant with lots of "ohs and dohs" when once the answers were revealed. Some eighty questions or so ranging from books to politicians and food to well known places in England.(or perhaps unknown!)

In a hard fought but close contest, "The Rumpole's" made up of our "Legal Beagles" of John Weeden, ably supported by Marjanne and Nigel Johnson, ran out worthy winners, each rewarded with a bottle of fine wine for their efforts. Congratulations should also go out to the "The Singles" who came a close 2nd, captained by Peter Hines, supported by Anne Pearson, Ann Vizer and David Keen, who became the first team to get a maximum score of 10/10 for their knowledge on books. Well done.

All in all a good evening aided by an excellent supper provided by Wayne & Chrissy, mine hosts, at the K.A. Also thanks to the most efficient staff.

If you have not availed yourself of one of our events why not do so? No great mystique attached to it, just give your name to the organiser and turn up. You won't regret it.

Peter Hayes



David Keen & Frank Skilbeck “The art of making and flying large model aircraft”

Member David Keen and Frank Skillbeck, (fellow aircraft modeller and secretary of the Newent and District Model Aircraft Club) treated us to a very interesting illustrated talk about building and flying Large Model Aircraft. The term ‘Large Model Aircraft’ means any model aircraft weighing between 25kg and 150 kg.

The talk focussed on David’s stunning scale model of a Focke Wulf 190 (WW2 German Fighter) with which he demonstrated the techniques and materials used in its construction. Although many of the techniques and materials were ‘traditional’ aeromodelling techniques, these were combined with more modern materials such as glass fibre matting and resin with lightweight filler to ensure a perfect finish. The colour scheme was chosen to match a specific plane which was flown by a German Air Force Captain for whom David has flying career details. The detail was accurate down to the rivet markings and panel joints in the skin as well as the features of the model pilot in the fully detailed cockpit, and although not as complex, it was also fitted with a radial engine as installed in the original.

The regulations in force for building and flying large model aircraft require that the model is inspected during the building process, and it must undergo specific test flights before it is granted a certificate allowing it to be flown; the pilot must also be in possession of the appropriate licence. The regulations and inspection processes are set by the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The intricacies of the control systems were explained in the context of the inspection and licencing requirements in that all controls are required to be duplicated to ensure that failure in any one set of controls would not render the aircraft unflyable. We were then treated to a superb film of the aircraft flying; it was so realistic that it could have been mistaken for the ‘real thing’, even down to the engine sound.

We were also treated to a film of the model of our late Chairman Tony Pearson’s Vampire Jet which was powered by a real jet engine.

The talk was very well attended with many questions both during and after, covering virtually every aspect of the subject. I’m sure that there were other members as well as myself enthused close to the point of wanting to join the club and build a model! A very interesting and well-presented talk enthusiastically received by the audience and which was concluded by a very kind invitation to visit the club to experience flying a model ourselves by use of a ‘buddy box’ system allowing control to be transferred between pilot and novice.

Footnote: *The German Focke Wulf 190 entered operational service in late 1941 as a higher performance aircraft than the better-known Messerschmitt Me109 which was an older design, having been in operation since 1937 in the Spanish Civil War. Although the Me109 was further developed, it took a new aircraft to try and match the high performance of the Spitfires and Mustangs of the allied forces.*

John Martin

Where am I?



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



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