

# NEWSLETTER



## NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



# JUNE 2024

### **Message from our Chairman**

As we move into June I am optimistic that our weather will soon improve. We seem to have had a pretty grim year so far. I wonder if the ground will ever dry out.

As I look out from our kitchen window onto the Malvern Hills, I feel so privileged to live in an area of such outstanding beauty. When I see people queuing for hours at airports jetting off to foreign parts, I think to myself, Why? This country has so much to offer. Having travelled to many places around the world I realise how little we actually know about our country. I know the weather can be a bit unpredictable, but I am afraid those days of laying in the sun quietly frying are long gone and that more temperate conditions are more pleasing.

Pam and I recently spent a week at my ancestral home, St Ives in Cornwall. The amazing light and the colour of the sea can compete with anywhere in the world. It never fails to impress me how the town has not changed in 80 years, other than the names and occupancy of shops and restaurants changing, the only drawback being the hordes of visitors.

Mind you having seen pictures of some famous venues around the world, they seem to have the same issues.

It was very nice to attend our recent Pub lunch kindly organised by Julia & John Atkinson on what was a very warm day, nice not to have to wear a jumper.

Our Pub lunches are a vital part of our club activities, providing a relaxed and sociable atmosphere for members to connect

We plan to organise a Car Treasure Hunt this summer, a perfect opportunity to test our navigation skills whilst enjoying the local scenery and camaraderie.

Ending at a local pub should be the cherry on top! If we all manage to find it.

*Fraser*



**TUESDAY 11 JUNE 2024**

**ROD BARKER**

The **City of London**, widely referred to simply as **the City**, is a city, ceremonial county and local government district that contains the ancient centre, and constitutes, along with Canary Wharf, the primary central business district (CBD) of London and one of the leading financial centres of the world. The City is now only a small part of the metropolis of Greater London, though it remains a notable part of central London.



**TUESDAY 25 JUNE 2024**

**IAN BOSKETT**

The **Great Train Robbery** was the robbery of £2.61 million<sup>[2]</sup> (calculated to present-day value of £58 million), from a Royal Mail train heading from Glasgow to London on the West Coast Main Line in the early hours of 8 August 1963 at Bridego Railway Bridge, Ledburn, near Mentmore in Buckinghamshire, England. With careful planning based on inside information from an individual known as "The Ulsterman", whose real identity has never been established, the robbers escaped with over £2.61 million. The bulk of the stolen money has never been recovered.

### **Education counts:**

When I was young, I decided I wanted to be a doctor, so I took the entrance exam to attend medical school. One of the questions asked was to rearrange the letters PNEIS into the name of an essential human body part most useful when erect. Those who answered "spine" are doctors today. The rest of us are sending jokes via email

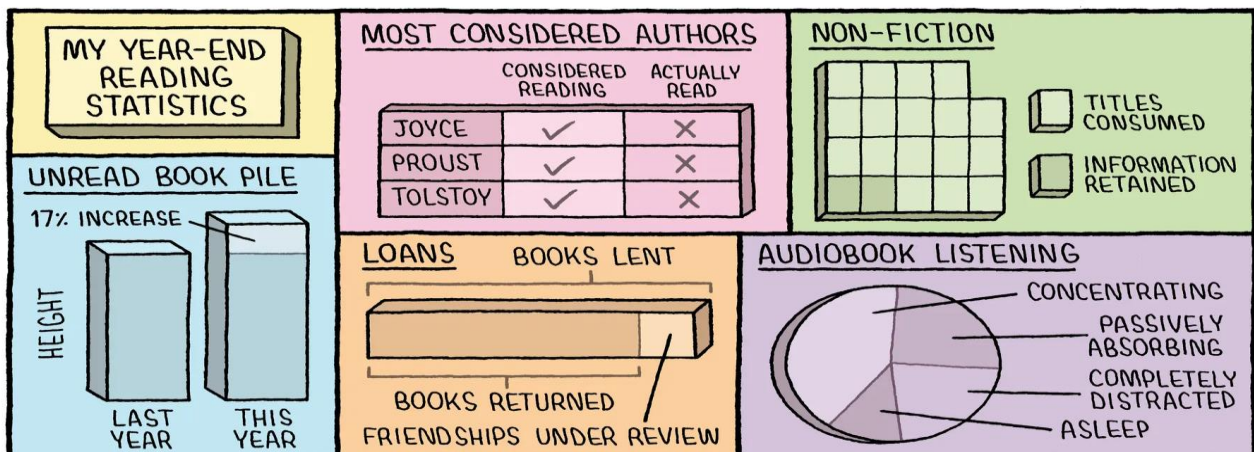


## PUB LUNCH



**The White Lion**  
Wilton Lane, Ross-on-Wye  
HR9 6AQ

**TUESDAY 4 JUNE 2024**



TOM GAULD

Paddy is painting his lounge, his wife walks in and can't believe how well he's doing, but the sweat is dripping off him. She says "Why on earth are you wearing your leather jacket and your Parka?" Paddy says "Hellooooo! read the instructions on the tin! , it says "For best results put two coats on"



"We're trialling a Thor day week!"

“You came here from there because you didn’t like it there and now you want to change here to be like there!”

“You are most welcome here, only don’t try to make here like there. If you want to make here like there, you shouldn’t have left there in the first place”.

“Someone asked me, if I were stranded on a desert island what book would I bring... ‘How to Build a Boat.’”

—STEVEN WRIGHT



Solar power is the future.  
But it won’t happen overnight!



### ***Famous Quotes***

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

John Kennedy

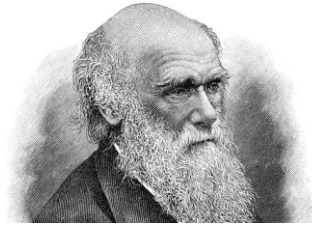
If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman.

Margaret Thatcher



### **Why Nuclear Waste creates a problem**

Different nuclear materials decay at a different rate. Some that are used for medical purposes have a half life of only a few minutes, but those that come out of nuclear power plants tend to last much longer. Uranium fission produces elements such as Cesium-137 and Strontium -90, which have half lives of about 30 years, Plutonium fission can produce Plutonium-239 which has a half life of 24,000 years.



## CAN PLANTS THINK?



In one of his last works, *The Power of Movement in Plants*, written with his son Francis and published in 1880, Charles Darwin suggested the root-brain hypothesis: the idea that plants have a brain-like structure in their roots. Over ninety years later, in 1973, another book, by Peter Tompkins *The Secret Life of Plants* developed the basic idea more, making extraordinarily strong claims for the consciousness of plants.

Darwin had begun the debate about plant intelligence that is still ongoing. [*Prince, Charles was outspoken on environmental sustainability, education and young people. Dedicated to plants and his garden, he revealed in 1986, and again in 2012, that he talks to plants. "I just come and talk to the plants, really. "Very important to talk to them, they respond," he said.*]

Plants do many remarkable things; the question he had raised was whether or not they do them with any kind of consciousness. Those who believe they do frame plant behaviour as plant “Neurobiology”. Those who don’t [Including most of the conventional scientific establishment] point out that plants lack a nervous system, so studying them as though they have one doesn’t make sense.

This isn’t to downplay the extraordinary qualities of plants but to give them their own space in studies rather than needing to anthropocentrically compare them with our own abilities. “Animals learn, Plants adapt” goes the thinking.

### ADAPTATION AND REACTION.

Unlike animals, plants can’t move, so in order to survive they have adapted to their immediate environments in many ways.

They can lose a very high proportion of their body and still regenerate (for example, if something starts to eat them, they can’t move away) and they have sophisticated biochemical abilities, both reacting to chemical molecules around them and producing them for themselves. In one experiment, an *Arabidopsis* mustard plant was played vibrations of a cabbage white caterpillar – (one of its predators) -eating: in response, it flooded its leaves with glucosinolates, chemicals that made them too bitter to be palatable.

Does this sort of reaction indicate that plants can think? Probably not in any way we would recognise as conscious thought.

But that may not really be relevant question: given all the ways in which plants are remarkable enough in their own right, perhaps its best to explore their many different adaptations and abilities without crediting them with full animal type thought processes too.



### Airspeed AS.51 Horsa Glider

## WOT! No engines? – HORSAs the silent warrior

On Tuesday 14 May Our guest speaker James Rendell standing in at short notice brought us the story of the most unusual aircraft of WWII.

For many people, even the thought of flying in a modern aeroplane, protected by all manner of safety devices, fills them with dread. Imagine, then, becoming airborne in a device built of wood which is only 1.5mm thick with no creature comforts or engine whilst at the same time there are tens of thousands of the enemy on the ground doing their best to kill you. This was the reality of being a passenger in a revolutionary glider, named the Horsa, which was used extensively in the D Day and the Arnhem landings. Our guest speaker James Rendell brought this and much more vividly to life in his talk on a little known aspect of World War II.

James was born before the Horsa was created but has retained a lifelong interest in it, mainly through his work with the Jet Age museum, based in Staverton in Gloucester

The Airspeed AS.51 Horsa was a British troop-carrying glider used during World War II. It was developed and manufactured by Airspeed Limited, alongside various subcontractors; the type was named after HORSAs, the legendary 5th-century conqueror of southern Britain. It had a wingspan of 27 metres, and weighed some 3840 kg and made its maiden flight in September 1941. Its passenger load capacity was some 30 troops but it could also carry Jeeps and even a tank. Among its co-designers was the novelist Neville Shute, later to become famous for his war novels, including "A Town Like Alice"

The Horsa was an Army aircraft not RAF and was flown by Army Sergeants, Although they were trained to fly by the RAF.

Silence was a key factor in the concept of using gliders rather than conventional powered aircraft with the ability to penetrate behind enemy lines without the drone of engines being heard. They were first used in the early days of the Normandy landings and in fact some of their occupants were instrumental in liberating the first building held by the Germans, the Café Gondrée a small café owned by Thérèse and George Gondrée just opposite Pegasus Bridge which still stands today.

Café Gondrée  
1944



Café Gondrée  
2024

The final design for the new glider was completed in just 11 months, an extraordinary achievement given that Britain was, at the time, at the height of its conflict with Germany and the Battle of Britain was being fought in the skies of southern England. With seating for up to 30 troops, the Horsa was much bigger than its American contemporary (the Waco CG-4A) which only had a capacity of 12.



**Airspeed AS.51 Horsa**



**Waco CG-4A**

The type's most famous sortie was carried out by six Horsas, on the evening of 5 June 1944 codenamed Operation Deadstick and delivered an advance force of 80 paratroopers, on the evening of 5th June, the night before the D-Day landings. These men, from D Company of the 2nd Oxfordshire & Buckingham Light Infantry, were transported by the Glider Pilot Regiment into the countryside, just four miles from the Normandy coast

Under cover of darkness and after an almost silent approach, they were responsible for successfully securing the strategically important bridge (now known as Pegasus Bridge) at Bénouville, over the Caen Canal in Normandy. Although one of the officers in the raid had the doubtful privilege of being the first fatal casualty of the invasion.

The Horsa was a major factor in a number of operations that followed the successful Normandy assault. These included Operation Dragoon and Operation Market Garden, which involved 1,205 gliders in 1944. A year later Horsas were involved in Operation Varsity (March 1945) when 440 aircraft carried soldiers of the 6th Airborne Division across the Rhine, in the type's final operation of the war.

The end of hostilities found no peacetime use for the Horsa and today it can only be found in fewer than half a dozen specialist museums in both England and Europe.

Peter Hayes

### **HORSA SUPPLEMENT.**

*As if flying in a plane and relying on the pilot to evade enemy shellfire wasn't bad enough, the troops in a Horsa, which was only slightly one step ahead of those Balsa wood kits that we so lovingly made as children, had another peril to contend with: By their very nature, they lacked safety provisions so no "crumple zones etc" and there was never any time for an orderly weight distribution of the occupants, pre take-off first in – last out.*

*The Horsa tended to be nose heavy and often the undercarriage had been dispensed with if the landing area was uneven or contained much undergrowth. Only rudimentary seating and as likely as not, seat belts would have been dispensed with. This meant that, when the inevitable forced landing occurred the occupants were thrown towards the front, Broken necks and/or spinal injuries abounded, often beating gunshot wounds etc as a cause of casualties. Add a cargo, such as a Jeep careering towards the unfortunate crew in the event of a forced landing and, like me perhaps you wonder why the incidence of injuries wasn't even higher*



### **Water supplies in Newent & Forest of Dean**

On Tuesday 28 May we were treated to an excellent talk by Dood Pearce about the availability and supply of water to Newent and surrounding areas commencing with a review of the situation in Newent in medieval times. There is even a Roman water trough in Lydney, so water supplies in the area have been managed for almost 2 millennia. Newent is very fortunate in its location, because only a few meters below Newent the geology consists of sandstone layers which provide a superb storage for water. This means that from the earliest days local springs and relatively shallow wells could supply useable quantities of fresh clean water. As an example, there exist records of wells in the area from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century including one at Flaxley Abbey in 1141. However, for most homes the only way to obtain water was to visit a local spring or stream and carry the water to the home in buckets, a situation that pertained until recent times.

About 200 years ago a few public wells became available. These might be served by springs or some simple pumps, which began to be installed where wells could be easily dug. Newent was very lucky in this case as the sandstone layer was near to the surface and naturally filtered the water, making it relatively safe to drink.

However the water still required to be carried from the well to each house. In some larger towns small supplies could be moved by making wooden pipes from trees which were drilled out to provide a rudimentary pipe. London and larger towns, including Gloucester, were known to have some piped water by the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Larger supplies were available to wealthy households in a few cities served by pumps using mill wheels to provide power to raise the water from wells and push it through wooden pipes to nearby houses. Gloucester had a pipe from a pump on the Severn River and even a simple lead pipe was installed from local hills to the city in 1547 but this was destroyed during the civil war period. These sources were sometimes supplemented by small reservoirs, and it is known that a few of these had been built locally by the 1750's. But as towns grew in size during the Victorian era, more substantial supplies became essential. In 1891 a severe drought in the Gloucester area caused a pumping station to be built in Newent to exploit the good water supply in the area and wells up to 150 feet deep were sunk in 1893 to provide secure supplies for Gloucester. At that time, Gloucester City installed a steam pump to supply large quantities of water to the city. Nevertheless Newent had to wait until the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century before an initial water supply was negotiated with Gloucester City in 1909 to get a piped supply into Newent.



The supply was distributed through cast Iron pipes and, as the water was hard, the pipes did not corrode and many survived until modern times. The piped supply was also used to provide public troughs and wells for those who could not afford to have water pipes laid to their homes. Some of these wells exist today, but most are now dry as widespread supplies became available during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

A new water pumping station was built at Ketford in 1921, but the builders of the associated wells did not realise that below the sandstone levels, which supplied fresh water, were salty waters which could pollute the good water from the sandstone level. The management of this salty pollution was to be a challenge right up to the present day. However the water supply was large and reliable and steam pumps were installed which were used continuously until 1956 when electrical pumps were made available and the old pumping stations began to become redundant, particularly after the 1980's when new pumps could be installed at the bottom of the wells and allowed the older surface pumps housed in the large station buildings to be removed.

During this time, the local water stations were taken over by Water Boards in 1967 and in 1974 the services were reorganised and Severn -Trent became the operator of all local water. New supplies were made available in 1973 when water from the Wye River was collected by pumps at Mitcheldean and very large reservoirs were built to hold large supplies to enable secure 24 hour supplies and the pumps to be used only at off peak times.

Since 1990 the older pipes had begun to deteriorate and new main pipes using modern Polyethylene pipes which should last for very many years were progressively installed throughout the Newent Area

The Newent Supplies from Retford and Mitcheldean were relatively clean and only required small amounts of chlorine to be added to ensure the clean standards which were brought in around the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war following an outbreak of Typhoid in Croydon in 1935 which was traced to contaminated water supplies. Today modern screens are also used to ensure the high quality of the water is maintained at all times.

So Dood assured us that our water is likely to be secure and safe for many years to come.

David Clowes

## **WATER vs LAND**

*Global warming has made extreme flooding events more common and plenty of ancient legends describe catastrophic floods. Could there ever be a flood in which every part of the world was covered in water?*

*Over 70% of the Earth is covered in water. The vast majority of the water on the planet – over 95% - is in the oceans. What's left over is frozen at the poles, as groundwater in aquifers, hanging in the atmosphere as water vapour, or free flowing in lakes and rivers. This makes up quite an impressive total, but still not nearly enough for a full global flood. If you added it all together, (including all the melted glaciers and ice caps, all the water in the atmosphere condensed into rain and falling in one go), it would still represent only around a quarter of the water needed to cover all the land areas on Earth.*



### **CONCREATE = a new word**

As I get older, I find myself making the simplest of mistakes and not only when writing. Today, for example I found that, in attempting to write a piece on the latest shortcomings of Landscape Architecture, for no other reason than, with age, too, comes the need to moan! I had typed “Concreate”. By some mischance, it was exactly the word that I wanted so it will now form part of my lexicon.

I was endeavouring to write something about the “improvements” to King’s Square, Gloucester which, to my eyes at least, has been transformed to something that resembles a WW2 tank training ground. Masses of what I thought was concrete but I have subsequently discovered that it is a form of Japanese granite, no doubt expensively imported from that country.

I know that “beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder” but if the architect wanted something that looked so much like concrete then why didn’t they (note the political correctness. Ed) use the material in the first place and save some cash.

I think that the architect was an even earlier user of the word “concreate”

PHH



Where am I this month?

As previously mentioned I have included a new section in the newsletter for anyone wishing to sell an unwanted item.



**PORTEK** Folding Sawhorse with chainsaw clamp which allows the saw to be used with one hand. Used but in good condition - **£25** The chainsaw is not included. Pictures and further details can be found on Amazon etc. contact **John Martin 01452 760109**



### **FLYMO POWER TRIM 500 XT**

Electric grass trimmer and lawn edger.

**FEATURES:** Plant guard preserves line and protects plants and shrubs. Automatic double line feed for easy use and fast trimming. Trim difficult to access places. Unique roller for easy edging.

**TECHNICAL:** Power rating 500 W Cutting width 25 cm Feed mechanism Autofeed

Number of line exits 2 Weight (excl. cutting equipment) 3,7 kg

**£25** Contact **Fraser: 07960463462**

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submitted articles and assisted  
with production.  
Ed**



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