



PROBUS RECORDER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET
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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – *Roger Lester*

Our meeting on July 12th saw us congratulating Horace on his 102nd birthday - it was actually the day before. We all gave a rousing rendition of Happy Birthday and wished him many more of them, for which Horace thanked us. It brought a smile to his face, and he actually heard it!

I was talking about global warming in my last contribution and at the meeting on the 12th we were in shirt sleeve order. As I write, we've had temperatures of 35°C here in Gillingham (not 40°C as in the East - thank goodness) with more heat to come, so the Met Office say. Not many people have Air Con, so the only way to cope is to get a fan (as in hot countries). I had three on the go for the duration of the heatwave and they made it much easier to stay cool(ish). I went to bed late at night after shutting the windows & got up about 5am to open them all up again. At present it is raining lightly, but we need a great deal more to green up the grass and the gardens. Having said that it's pouring now - excellent!!

Coffee mornings are still going very well on Fridays at 1100 in the Slade Cafe and this morning was particularly well attended when 10 members were present. Everyone is most welcome to come along for a chat and a laugh!

Stay well!



WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare Report – *Roger Ellis*

This report is happily fairly brief, and I am indebted to members for updating me on those they have seen or been in contact with.

I gather Chas Allberry is none too special at present and I will ring Christine for news of the current situation. Tom Brain saw Ken Steadman at a recent reunion, and although he was in a wheelchair (which indicates he is still awaiting the heart operation) he seemed fine.

On a personal note I am delighted to see Simon Hills back amongst us again after his short stay with Shaftesbury Probus, and we are of course a far nicer club and more welcoming!

Social - Lunches

We had an interesting experience at Kimber last Tuesday - so let us leave it at that! The menu for Hill Brush on 20th September is on the Probus web site therefore you have no excuse not to come - with almost two months to make your menu choice.

Social – Visits

A visit to “[Sculpture by the Lakes](#)” near Dorchester was suggested by John Owen, our Social Coordinator. He was unable to lay it on as a formal Probus outing because the place doesn't provide facilities for groups; understandably everything is geared to individuals since 'artistic taste' is not a group trait! His report on the 'adventure' follows.

“Six hardy souls travelled down to the Sculpture Park by the Lakes and thoroughly enjoyed an immensely stimulating and thought-provoking visit. The weather was perfect, the on-site food provision was very good, and the gardens and exhibits allowed for some really creative discussion. It is fair to say that there were no particularly profound observations by our group, but it was also clear that we were all enjoying the calm, well presented 22 acres of Dorset's beautiful scenery. While the exhibits themselves were clearly out of our collective financial reach, some of us were sufficiently savvy to recognise the excellent plants on offer, especially at 50% off!!!”

All in all, an interesting day and one I would thoroughly recommend for our more discerning members!



REPORTS ON OUR JUNE/JULY TALKS

HM Hospital Ship Uganda during the Falklands War

Lt Cdr (Retd) Mark Trasler MBE, 28th June 2022

Forty years ago, in 1982, the 10-week undeclared war with Argentina occurred, following the invasion of the British Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic on 2nd April 1982. In order to re-establish British sovereignty, a naval task force was hastily assembled, having to travel thousands of miles to reach the theatre of war.

Representatives of the media were allowed under strict control to report back to the British public, but virtually no information was released at the time about the medical support and hospital arrangements; the press were not allowed in the ships allocated to this role.

Mark Trasler, then at a much more junior rank than at the end of his career, was heavily involved in the medical services supporting the war, when he specialised in blood transfusions in the Hospital ship *Uganda*; he feels that the importance of the ship's role in the war deserves greater recognition than has been the case since 1982. His talk was illustrated by photographs of the ship showing the rapid transformation from an educational cruise ship to a requisitioned hospital ship.



Originally built as a passenger and cargo liner, in 1982 *Uganda* was in use by P&O as an educational cruise ship. When the ship arrived in Naples, her call-up for military duty to accompany the Task Force meant that the passengers and school children on board were discharged and flown home. *Uganda* sailed on to Gibraltar for an impressive three-day

refit in Gibraltar Dockyard and metamorphosis into a registered hospital ship. A helicopter platform was added, together with equipment for refuelling at sea; wards and operating theatres were installed, and extra water facilities added. The swimming pool was converted into an area for receiving casualties. The student classrooms would be used for high dependency patients, with the student accommodation for low dependency cases. A 45° ramp was added to enable casualties to be stretchered down from the casualty reception area to the lower decks on arrival. The student games area was used for triage assessment, and the first-class lounge as an intensive care ward. In order to comply with registration under the Geneva Convention, *Uganda* was painted white, with red crosses on the hull and upper deck.





A team of medical staff left from Portsmouth to join the ship, including doctors, operating theatre staff, and 40 Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service nurses, together with medical supplies. The ship sailed for the Falklands on 19 April. Survey vessels HMS *Hecla*, HMS *Hydra* and HMS *Herald* were converted into ambulance ships to work with Uganda.

Mark Trasler commented that the large number of stores included four army hospital kits brought in from British Forces in Germany, 230 iron beds and mattresses, and

intravenous fluids. Inevitably there were some things that were found to be missing, such as a blood-bank fridge.

Uganda was to sail to Ascension Island to meet up with the Task Force, but was forced to divert to Freetown, Sierra Leone, to discharge the captain who had become seriously ill. Several days later the ship arrived in [Grantham Sound](#), 11 miles off Goose Green, East Falkland, to take up her duties. Every evening the ship moved 40 miles north from the anchorage to avoid acting as a lit-up beacon for the attacking Argentine aircraft.

Uganda received her first casualties, from the destroyer HMS *Sheffield*, on 12 May. *Uganda* co-ordinated the movements of the ambulance ships. Mark Trasler told us about the difficulties experienced in performing surgical operations and caring for casualties – both British and Argentine – in less-than-ideal conditions, and the lack of logistical support. Water shortages had to be overcome, and surgical equipment had to be re-used.



Uganda – Operating theatre

During the conflict, 503 surgical operations were performed on *Uganda*, and 206 further operations based at a former refrigeration plant in Ajax Bay; overall 855 surgical operations were performed during the period of hostilities.



Ajax Bay – Operating theatre

One particular emergency number of burns cases, many following the bombing of *Sir Tristram*. Mark Trasler's level of burns patients. Due supplies, there had to be transfusions. There was also ventilators, so bandsmen orderlies) manually 'bagged' casualties were evacuated by Uruguay.



RFA Sir Galahad

was having to deal with a large of them Welsh guardsmen, RFA ships *Sir Galahad* and job was to monitor the fluid to the shortage of blood donor sessions for a shortage of mechanical (who double as medical some patients. Stabilised helicopter to Montevideo,

By the middle of July, *Uganda*'s role as a hospital ship had ended, and she was therefore 'de-regulated' from being a hospital ship, and sailed for Southampton on 18 July, after 113 days at sea.

Lt. Cdr Tresler had over 40 years' service in the Royal Naval Medical Service, during which - as well as the Falklands Conflict - he saw service in the Gulf War and Bosnia.

Following questions, our Chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs

'High Adventures'

Alastair Olver – 2nd July 2022

Alastair is one of our Club's more recently joined members. He is a former chemical engineer and operations manager, and now lives in Gillingham.

After their experiences of hill walking (for example 'bagging' some of the Scottish Munros, including Cairn Gorm in the Highlands), Alastair and his wife Julie decided some years ago on a more adventurous leisure activity – that of climbing peaks and mountains. His talk, accompanied by photographs, related the locations of the peaks they have climbed and the kit with which this had been achieved. For the latter, he brought along some of the equipment considered necessary for undertaking serious hill and mountain climbing, including safety helmets, crampons, hill and mountain boots, ice axes etc, and he stressed the need for proper clothing.



After a long absence from serious hill walking, Alastair and Julie realised the need to train progressively and work up to climb and walk safely on higher mountains and peaks. So, in 2013, they walked the '**Yorkshire 3 Peaks**' in the Yorkshire Dales National Park (Pen-y-Ghent, Ingleborough, and Wharfedale), which although only reaching a modest height of slightly under 730 metres, took a gruelling 11½ hours to complete. **Snowdon**, the highest mountain in Wales at 1,085 metres (3,560 ft), was also climbed in the same year.

Much higher peaks were climbed in subsequent years, including the highest peaks in the UK – **Scafell Pike** in the Lake district (the highest peak in England at 978 metres (3,200 ft)); **Ben Nevis**, the highest peak in Scotland (1,345 metres (4,413 ft)).

During the period between 2014 and 2019, higher altitudes were achieved on group treks accompanied by experienced guides. These took place in a number of different countries.

- **Annapurna Sanctuary – Nepal.** This is a high glacial plateau (4,130 metres (13,550 ft)) surrounded by the Annapurna range. Unfortunately bad weather conditions prevented them reaching the Base Camp.



- **Gran Paradiso – Italy.** (4,061 metres (13,320 ft)) Gran Paradiso lies in the Italian Grian Alps between Piedmont and the Aosta valley.



- **Toubkal - Southwestern Morocco.** Toubkal is the highest peak in the Atlas Mountains (4,167 metres (13,671 ft)). Alastair remarked on the significant change in temperature from the hot and dry climate at the base to a much colder environment higher up. Cold weather gear and kit is essential, as is the need to take care on the snow slopes.



Other areas and peaks over 4,000 metres that were trekked included planned routes in:

- The **Saas Grund** area of **Switzerland**.



- The Haute Route to the **Matterhorn** in **Switzerland** (4,478 metres (14,692 ft)), where the group met and photographed a mountain goat on the summit!



- In 2018 the highest mountain in **Ethiopia**, **Ras Dashen** was tackled (4,620 metres (15,157 ft)); it is located in the Simien Mountains National Park, and on this Alastair and Julie were accompanied by their son.



- Alastair had to call off a planned trip to the **Grand Couloir** on **Mont Blanc**, the notorious mountain in France (4,809 metres (15,777 ft)) but returned a year later. The Couloir (below) can be extremely dangerous and is a known accident black spot.



- Alastair and Julie also undertook a trip to **Mount Kenya** when they were accompanied by their daughter, and reached 'Point Lenana', the third-highest peak on Mount Kenya (4,985 metres (16,355 ft)). Mount Kenya itself is the second highest mountain in Africa and lies within the Mount Kenya National Park which is rich in biodiversity.



- **Mount Kilimanjaro** in **Tanzania** (5,895 metres (19,340 ft)) was a real challenge. It is the highest mountain in Africa and the high altitudes caused great physical discomfort due to lack of oxygen. Nevertheless, with the assistance of the guides, all members of the group reached the peak, and celebrated afterwards.



Alastair's talk certainly held our interest, evidenced by the subsequent questions from many of those present. The chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs



ENDPIECE – Editor

Before providing my final words for this issue, I would like to share with you an indication of what some of us – well, one of us to be precise, gets up to in his advancing years. **Dave Hooker** has acquired a new toy and wishes all of us to be aware that he's on the lookout for a full set of leathers to go with it. Whether Pam will ride pillion is yet to be determined.

Good luck from all of us Dave – happy riding and *'may the wind be always at your back'!*



'Age in Wonderland'

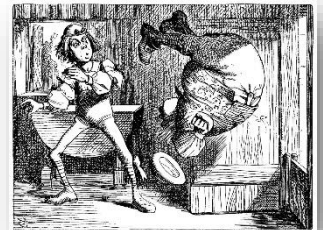


"You are old, Father William," the young man said,
And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head-
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," Father William replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

"You are old," said the youth, "as I mentioned before,
And have grown most uncommonly fat;
Yet you turned a back somersault in at the door-
Pray, what is the reason of that?"

In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
"I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment-one shilling the box-
Allow me to sell you a couple?"



"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak-
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

"In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."

"You are old," said the youth, "one would hardly suppose
That your eye was steady as ever;
Yet, you balanced an eel on the end of your nose-
What made you so awfully clever?"

"I have answered three questions, and that is enough,"
Said his father. "Don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you downstairs!"



Lewis Carroll in 'Alice in Wonderland' 1865