



PROBUS



RECORDER

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – *Roger Lester*

'Tempus Fugit' as the Romans said - and they were right! February has gone in a flash, and we are already two months closer to Christmas 2023. After being so mild through January and February, the weather has taken a decided return to winter with a north easterly bringing cold but mostly dry days and increasing our energy bills. It'll soon be time to get the garden back into shape with Easter just over a month away - and then look forward to the 'lazy-hazy-crazy days of summer' with the club's BBQ around July/August normally bringing good weather.

We had a Ladies Invitation Day this past week and had an interesting talk on the Red Arrows by Phil Holt, who is going to talk to us about Donald Campbell at the end of October. I think the Reds talk was well received, and it was followed by the Club's first lunch at the Rugby Club. Twenty-five attended the lunch and I understand it was very good. Thanks to Roger E. for organising the event.

Susan & I had lunch out in Salisbury on Thursday with 5 friends from Hook & Portsmouth who we had met on several cruises over the years; unfortunately no cruises with them are on the cards this year. On the way home we dropped into Wilton village for a bit of 'retail therapy'. Unfortunately there aren't many shops there now; just a shoe shop, a carpet shop and a few artisan shops; it is now called 'the guild – Wiltshire'. The car park has been tarmacadamed, which must've cost a fortune, so it is assumed that the hope is for trade to pick up, possibly around Easter??!!!

I would like to remind members that just because we have had to move the AGM to 30th May owing to holiday commitments, we are now open to receiving nominations for Committee membership positions as soon as possible, so that ballot papers can be prepared. I'm sorry to keep banging on about it, but it is important to get 'new blood' into the committee - even if it is only a trickle!!

I wish you all the best and look forward to seeing you at our fortnightly meetings.

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare – *Roger Ellis*

Referring to my last report it was so nice to see Christine Allberry at the Probus Lunch last Tuesday, and I know she enjoyed meeting old friends once again. She finds life difficult at times, which is only to be expected, but I will send her the menu for the lunch at the Udder Farm Shop in March so that she can continue to keep in touch with Probus members.

I sent a get-well card to Peter Bonson on behalf of us all and had a positive reply. Peter had hoped to make the last meeting, but he continues to have mobility issues.

Social – Lunches – Roger Ellis

As you probably know, we are going to lunch at the Udder Farm Shop in March, but I plan for our April event to try the Royal Chase Hotel - where we had our Christmas Lunch. I know most of you were impressed by the effort they made then, and I thought I would see if they can repeat this in two months' time.

Ron Walker is taking over from me in May as 'Lunch Organiser' and will be arranging the Probus meals from then onwards. I know he has been all around South Somerset, North Dorset and into Wiltshire winking out the various Kentucky Fried Chicken, Burger King and of course MacDonald's outlets - so you know we will all be in for some gourmet meals in the coming months. For those of you with a nervous disposition - it's called irony!

Social - Future Club Events - Editor

Tuesday 7th March 2023	'Gillingham Deserves Better' <i>Malcolm Briggs</i>
Tuesday 21st March 2023	'The London to Brighton Veteran Car Run' <i>Peter Hurst</i> There is a lunch this day at the Udder Farm Shop, East Stour



REPORTS ON OUR JANUARY TALKS

'The Life and Death of the Bismarck'

James Porter – 7 February 2023

Although a career soldier, James has always had an interest in naval history; this talk about the German battleship Bismarck reflects his interest in ships and armour.

Bismarck (and her sister ship **Tirpitz**) were the largest battleships ever built by Nazi Germany. The country was intent on rebuilding her navy in the late 1930's, following the scuttling of her WWI fleet in Scapa Flow in 1919.



The **Bismarck** was laid down in 1936 and commissioned into the German navy in August 1940. The ship had a displacement of 41,000 tons, mounted eight huge 15" guns and many AA guns,

and was equipped with range finders and radar. It had a top speed of 30 knots, which was faster than existing British battleships; its main purpose was to attack convoys of British shipping at sea, to starve Britain of essential supplies.

Under the overall command of Admiral Günther Lütjens, the aim of *Bismarck* was to venture into the Atlantic to wreak damage. There was a sense of superiority on the part of the Germans; after all they would outclass the Royal Navy with their heavily armoured ship with its ability to stay at sea for long periods without refuelling, and with guns larger than the 14" on British battleships.

In May 1941 the British received intelligence that *Bismarck* was at sea, along with the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, intending to break out into the Atlantic to start wreaking havoc on the convoys. The German naval force was spotted on the move, and the British were alerted. The battlecruiser *HMS Hood* and the battleship *HMS Prince of Wales* were despatched with accompanying vessels to reinforce other RN ships in the Denmark Strait to prevent the move into the wider ocean. On *Bismarck* encountering *HMS Suffolk* and later *HMS Norfolk* there was a brief exchange of fire; the battle of the Denmark Strait was now joined. On arrival on the scene of *HMS Hood* and *HMS Prince of Wales*, the *Hood* engaged *Prinz Eugen* (mistakenly identifying her as *Bismarck*).

The two German ships concentrated their fire on the *Hood*. The engagement continued, but an armour piercing shell fired on *Hood* reached its magazine causing a huge explosion, resulting in its sinking; all but 3 of the ship's crew of 1,419 were lost.

Fire then concentrated on *Prince of Wales* causing severe damage, although the British ship scored several hits on *Bismarck* as well. The order was given for *Prince of Wales* to retreat and break off the engagement. The Germans did not give chase, opting instead to head for the open Atlantic, with the aim of reaching Saint-Nazaire.



Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered all warships in the area to give chase. A force of six battleships and battlecruisers, two aircraft carriers and a large number of other vessels were committed to the hunt, including the battleship *HMS Rodney*. Swordfish torpedo bombers would attack from the carriers.

Despite *Bismarck* taking evading action, one of the torpedoes struck home flooding one of her boilers, thus slowing her speed significantly. But she managed to evade the British fleet for a while until contact was again made, and *Bismarck* was attacked once more by torpedo bombers, as a result of which a hit jammed the rudders, rendering the ship impossible to steer properly.



The British ships continued the engagement, with *HMS Norfolk* and *HMS Suffolk* leading. The order was eventually given by Admiral Lütjens to scuttle *Bismarck* to prevent the British from boarding, and to reduce the number of casualties. Thus, the brief life of this ‘unsinkable’ ship ended. Out of the crew of 2,200, 115 were rescued.

James Porter also mentioned the discovery in 1989 of the *Bismarck* wreck off Brest by Dr Robert Ballard (he also found the wreck of the *Hood*).

This talk, accompanied by numerous photos and video, gave a very detailed description of the *Bismarck* and the final battle, and gave a glimpse of the raw power of these heavy fighting ships.

The chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs



‘The Red Arrows’

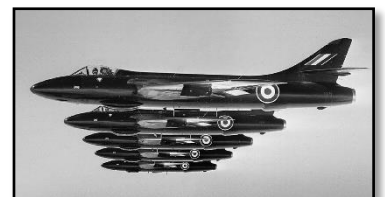
Phil Holt – 21 February 2023

Phil Holt’s professional career as an air traffic controller began in 1972, and spanned almost 40 years in various locations, including Heathrow and Manchester. He has served as a reservist in the RAF as a flying instructor; he is a trained pilot and is a flying display director. This talk on the Red Arrows is one of a number of talks in Phil’s repertoire.

The Red Arrows - officially known as the ‘Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team’ - was the latest of several previous RAF display teams. The value of bringing the importance of the Royal Air Force to the attention of the general public was recognised by Lord Trenchard in the early years of the Service - it had been formed in 1918 following the end of WWI. There were early ‘air pageants’, but by the late 1930’s all air displays had been stopped in the years leading up to WWII.

By the mid-1960s there were a number of unofficial teams sponsored by different RAF Commands.

The ‘**Black Arrows**’ (so named after the colour of the airframes) was an aerobatic demonstration team from 111 Squadron, flying Hawker Hunters from 1956 to 1961.



The '**Red Pelicans**' from the Central Flying School (CFS) was formed in 1960 flying Jet Provost T45s.



The '**Yellowjacks**' from No 4 Flying School flew Folland Gnat two-seater trainers in 1964; this was reformed into the mainstream of the Service in 1965.



The Red Arrows Team was formed in 1965, replacing all of the above Display Teams. The colour of the aircraft changed from yellow to red, and the team's official name became '**The Red Arrows**'.



The renamed team continued flying Folland Gnats until 1979, when they were superseded by the British Aerospace Hawk – an advanced single engine trainer aircraft. The ones used by the Red Arrows have been modified to generate coloured vapour trails, known as 'smoke' that produce red, white and blue trails during their flying displays. The team was originally based at RAF Little Rissington in Gloucestershire but has since moved several times and is now based at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire. Starting as a display array of seven jets, the number increased to nine in 1968.

Phil Holt explained that there are considerable resources and efforts required in backing



up the frontline team of pilots. For instance, the engineering element of 28 personnel changes regularly (9 are selected each season) and is known as 'The Blues'. Various ancillary trades are represented as part of this support, including avionics and electrical technicians, armourers and survival equipment technicians, all of whom looking after

their various aspects of the pilots and aircraft. The base team are joined by British Aerospace engineers in the winter months to ensure that the aircraft are still fit for purpose. Team flight training takes place in Greece each year, much of it over coastal waters for reasons of safety.

During displays the aircraft are not allowed to fly over the crowd apart from coming in from behind the area occupied by the public (the surprise element!), and manoeuvres are in front of and parallel to the audience. The coloured 'smoke' vapour trails, apart from adding to the dramatic effect of flying displays, are an essential safety aid for the pilots, enabling them to judge the slender distances involved when flying so close to each other.

The selection process for the pilots, who serve a period of duty with the Red Arrows of about 3 years, is extremely rigorous - not only testing their flying ability, but also for their characters since there is absolute need for trust as part of the team. Starting off with 20 to 30 applicants, the rigorous selection process finds three pilots who will be selected from 9 finalists from the process. Whilst the majority of Red Arrows pilots happen to be men, in 2010 Kirsty Murphy became the first ever female pilot appointed as a member of the team. After her stint of duty with the Red Arrows, Kirsty eventually left the RAF to be part of the Blades¹ display team – a British civilian aerobatic team based at Sywell Aerodrome in Northamptonshire.

In formation, the Red Arrows fly with the front 5 in 'Enid' formation, and the rear 4 in 'Gypo' formation. Even after being selected, new pilots are only entitled to wear their distinctive red flying suits when declared 'Ready' for their first public display.

Phil Holt gave us an insight into the meticulous organisation involved behind the scenes, where the discipline and trust of all members of the team are paramount in providing the necessary safety for aircraft and pilots, and thereby the public.

After questions, the Chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs



ENDPIECE – Editor

The passing of Common Sense

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, *Common Sense*, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was since his birth records were long ago lost in a jungle of bureaucratic red tape.

He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as knowing when to come in out of the rain, why the early bird gets the worm, and that life isn't always fair.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies. Don't spend more than you earn and by reliable parenting strategies; adults not children are always in charge.

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but misguided regulations were put in place. Reports of a six-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; a teenager suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; a teacher fired for reprimanding an abusive and unruly pupil; these instances only worsened his condition.

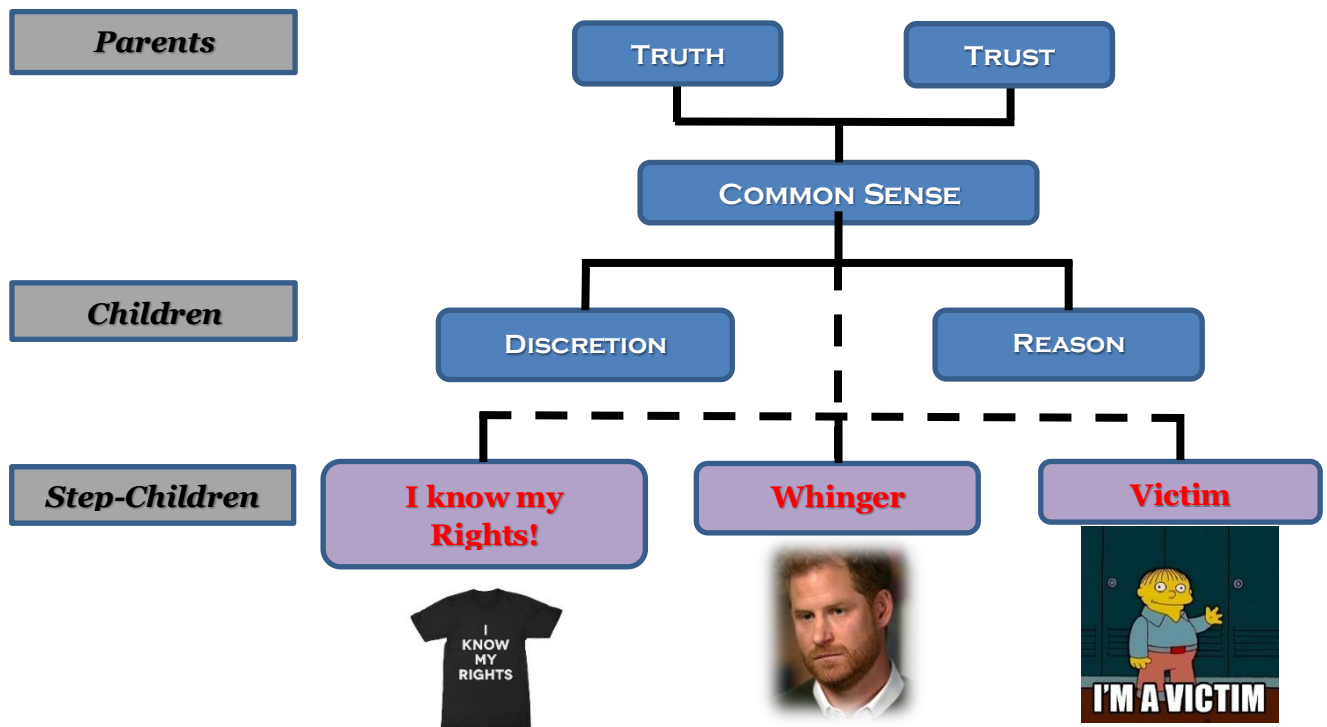
¹ Regrettably, the Blades aerobatic team announced that 2022 would be their last display season, for largely economic reasons.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer Panadol to a student but could not - and would not - inform the parents when a student became pregnant and wanted an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live when the Ten Commandments became contraband; churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense finally expired after a woman failed to realise that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled some in her lap and was promptly awarded a huge settlement. *Common Sense* was preceded in death by his parents - *Truth* and *Trust*; his Wife - *Discretion*; his Daughter - *Responsibility*; and his Son - *Reason*.

He is survived by three Stepbrothers: *'I know my Rights!'*, *'I'm a Whinger'*, and *'I am a Victim'*.



Sadly few people attended the funeral of *Common Sense* because so few realised that he had passed away. If you still remember him, please pass this on. If not - join the majority and do nothing.

Age and treachery will triumph over youth and skill

