



PROBUS



RECORDER

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES -

My final 'Chairman's Thoughts' for my term in office. I am writing this in the Crow's Nest lounge on the good ship Aurora (P&O) while sailing Northwards through the Bay of Biscay on our way home. On the way into the Med two weeks ago and while passing Gibraltar, we had sight of the USS George W Bush (aircraft carrier) and her 2 escorting destroyers leaving the Mediterranean on their way home - a sight that brought many passengers to the outside decks.



We have had a great holiday, which was fairly warm with the only dampener being in Trieste when it rained all morning. We also had 2 helicopter rescues ('medevacs') from the ship, both at around midnight; it brought back interesting personal memories when they made the announcement 'Hands to Flying Stations'!!

I must say it has been a privilege to have been your Chairman and I must thank my committee for the smooth running of the Club, especially Colin Chamberlain who, as Vice Chairman, has stepped up to the plate on a few occasions - the Christmas Dinner 2022 springs to mind, when I had flu and was unable to attend. Nick Hall continues to do a sterling job on the Recorder, reminding me each month when he needed my input!

The latest news on Horace from his son David is that he has checked in to Fern Brook Lodge in Gillingham (Room 49) and would be pleased to see visitors, who are welcome at any time during the day.

My time in office has seen a change in the Monarchy, the first in 70 years, from Queen Elizabeth II to King Charles III. I remember the celebrations back in 1953, when I watched the Coronation on a small black & white TV in the Old Glass House across the road, as did all the children from our road. Then the sports on the green with sweets as prizes and a BBQ to round the day off. This time it will be different - with a few drinks with neighbours in our cul-de-sac on the 6th of May after watching the ceremony in colour!!

God Save the King!

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare – Roger Ellis

I am delighted to be able to tell you that Dave Hooker has been discharged from hospital and has returned home.

We are experiencing some difficult times at the moment, with Peter Bonson’s stroke and one of our members having to take on the role of a carer. Wouldn’t it be nice if everyone reached one hundred and then passed away in their sleep after receiving and reading their birthday wishes from the King!

Horace is now established in the Care Home (you will have read from the Chairman of his wish to have visitors), and it would be great if his son David could bring him to future Probus meetings. I hope to visit Horace soon and I will give him your best wishes. However, I must remember not to arrange an appointment later that day as, if you know Horace, you will be aware of his ability to entertain and retain.

This will probably be the last Welfare Report you will read from me, as John Owen will be taking over my role from the AGM. It has been a pleasure to talk at length with so many of our members, but sometimes it can become a little sad - as you will appreciate.

Lastly - and absolutely nothing to do with welfare - can I tell you about the pleasures of laying cold tarmac! The approach road at Bishops Lydeard Station had some potholes that needed attention, and as a result I was introduced to the delights of this substance. I never thought at my age I would be handling a ‘tamper’ and using it in anger. Now - as for my plumbing expertise on water stand pipes !

Keep well.

Roger

Social - Future Club Events - Editor

Tuesday 2nd May 2023	The Countryside Regeneration Trust -- <i>Elaine Spencer-White</i>
Tuesday 16th May 2023	Annual General Meeting
	The Beauty & Romance of France -- <i>Christopher LeGrand</i>
Tuesday 30th May 2023	The West Dorset Coast -- <i>Mike Spencer</i> (There is a lunch this day, but no details are available at the time of publication.)



REPORTS ON OUR APRIL TALKS

‘Black Rod, and insights behind the scenes in Parliament’

4th April 2023



Lieutenant General David Leakey CMG CVO CBE, following retirement as a senior British Army Officer, was appointed to the post of Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod to the House of Lords in 2011; he served in that capacity until December 2017. This talk explained the historical background to the post of Black Rod (as the office holder is generally known) and its associated duties today.

The title ‘**Black Rod**’ is derived from the staff of office – an ebony staff topped by a golden lion; this is the symbol of the official’s authority. The office of Black Rod was created in 1350, with the current title dating from 1322. Edward III created the Most Noble Order of the Garter in 1348, and membership of the Order is awarded in recognition of a national contribution to public service is limited to the Sovereign, the Prince of Wales, and no more than 24 other living individuals. The ‘*Usher (or door keeper) of the Black Rod*’ was created as an officer of the Order. The Order now meets annually for a procession and church service at Windsor Castle, in which Black Rod was long ago given a residence.



Until about five years ago all holders of the Black Rod appointment were male, and the full title of the appointment was ‘*The Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod*’. Prior to 2002 the office rotated among senior officers of the Army, Navy, and RAF. This changed with the appointment in February 2018 of the present incumbent, Sarah Clarke, whose title is ‘*Lady Usher of the Black Rod*’. The method of appointment has been formalized, and the post is now advertised and subsequently organised by the Clerk of the Parliaments, who is the employer of all House of Lords officials. It is now open to all professions, and Sarah Clarke was previously Championships Director of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships.

General Leakey explained that the duties of Black Rod are far more extensive than the commonly held image of Black Rod banging the door to the Commons Chamber to summon MPs to the House of Lords at the state opening of Parliament by the Sovereign. In addition to the other ceremonial duties connected with the office, Black Rod has influence over the order of Private Bill legislation in Parliament. Black Rod is principally responsible for controlling access to, and maintaining order within, the House of Lords and its precincts. An earlier responsibility for security in the Palace of



Westminster has now been passed to other officials.

Black Rod is the personal attendant to the Sovereign in the House of Lords, and also secretary to the Lord Great Chamberlain. Either Black Rod or their deputy (the ‘Yeoman Usher’) is required to be present when the House is in session.

In addition, Black Rod has an important role in contingency planning and business resilience (should the Houses of Parliament have to be relocated elsewhere have to continue to function in an emergency); furthermore, the appointee is also responsible for event management for the

House of Lords, and for organising the guest list for State occasions.

David Leakey's talk included references to those rare times when even the most organised things can go wrong, such as when he accompanied the Queen and Prince Philip in the lift, pressing the button to go down, only to find the lift taking them to the top of the tower instead, to be greeted by two workmen who were waiting to descend!



After questions, Paul Hooley gave an impressive vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs



'Keep calm and carry on.'

18 April 2023



Our own Probus club member Paul Hooley gave a fascinating and well-researched talk about a suppressed slogan, aniseed balls & condoms: and the inspirational uses to which they were put that helped us win the second world war.

From the outbreak of war in 1939, the Ministry of Information had an important role, both in terms of propaganda, and for issuing home publicity posters aimed at boosting the morale of the general public. For the latter, three posters were designed, headed by the crown of King George VI, the first two being widely displayed in public places – '*Your courage, your cheerfulness, your resolution, will bring us victory*'; and '*Freedom is in peril, defend it with all your might*'.



The third in the series, '*KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON*' – was probably one of the most iconic

messages of the last century but was not released for public consumption. Indeed, the government felt that the message was too patronising and ordered the bulk pulping and recycling of 2.5 million copies of the poster. One copy was, however, discovered decades later in the year 2000 in a second-hand bookshop in Alnwick in Northumberland¹, leading to an explosion of interest, and a further 15 copies discovered in an attic also surfaced on The Antiques Road Show. This has led to the world-wide use of the slogan on many products.

Paul Hooley, whilst looking at his own collection of wartime photographs, spotted the 'Keep Calm and Carry On' poster on the wall of a secret government research laboratory in Bedfordshire, possibly the only evidence of the poster being used as originally intended. Many of these secret research units were located in Bedfordshire (and a few in neighbouring Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire). They were part of the top-secret unit Military Defence 1 (MD1) under the direct control of Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The unit brought together leading scientists to devise new weapons for the fight against Germany. Known as '*Churchill's toyshop*' the unit was so secret that many in the government and the civil service were unaware of its existence.



Amongst the many devices resulting from the research and development carried out by the MD1 unit were:

- A long-delay fuse, allowing the timing of devices to be set weeks before detonation.
- The '*sticky bomb*' was a grenade covered in a strong adhesive which, when uncovered by pulling a pin, enabled the grenade to be attached to the side of a tank or vehicle.



- The PIAT, a hand-held anti-tank weapon, was light enough to launch a bomb manually to disable tanks and other vehicles.

- The 'Hedgehog' mortar (so named after the rows of spigots) was an anti-submarine weapon which fired missiles containing 30lbs of TNT or 35lbs of Topex; these detonated on impact.



¹ [Barter Books, Alnwick Station](#)



• The Limpet mine, designed by Macrae and Clarke, was a magnetic explosive able to be attached to enemy vessels below the waterline by frogmen. The problem was how to do this and allow sufficient time for the frogmen to escape. This was solved using a washing up bowl purchased from Woolworths, an aniseed ball, and a condom! It was when Stuart Macrae was sucking an aniseed ball and he realised that the compound broke down in water at a regular rate – and that this could be used to create a detonator that dissolved slowly, allowing time to escape. The condom was used to keep the fuse dry. Clarke and Macrae then bought up Bedford’s entire supply of condoms and aniseed balls! The photograph showing the ‘Keep calm and carry on’ poster spotted by Paul shows technicians working in a MD1 unit, probably working on a bomb calorimeter, used for measuring explosive power.

The iconic poster is now out of copyright. Copies of the original poster are much sought after, commanding high prices at auction. Although he did not use the exact words, Churchill voiced similar sentiments, including these words: “*Do not despair, do not yield to violence and tyranny, march straightforward and die if need be - unconquered*”². Examples of this fortitude in the face of the gravest of times and situations are the inspirational Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Dame Sarah Gilbert, the co-developer of the AstraZeneca Covid vaccine. During the course of her work, Dame Sarah was given a mug (now on display in the London Science Museum) with the printed words ‘*Keep calm and develop vaccines*’. The words ‘keep calm and carry on’ are as relevant today with all our problems as they were in 1939.



After questions, the Chairman gave the vote of thanks for an excellent talk.

Report: Alan Jeffs



ENDPIECE – Editor

Some Thoughts on Healthy Living

Q: Doctor, I've heard that cardiovascular exercise can prolong life. Is this true?

A: The heart is only good for so many beats, and that's it... Don't waste time on exercise.

Everything wears out eventually. Speeding up the heart does not make you live longer; it's like saying you extend the life of a car by driving faster.

Want to live longer? **Take a nap.**

Q: Should I reduce my alcohol intake?

A: Oh no! Wine is made from fruit, and fruit is very good. Brandy is distilled wine; that means they take water out of the fruity bits, so you get even more of the goodness that way. Beer is also made of grain, and grain is good too.

Bottoms up!

² [VE Day Speech 8 May 1945](#)

Q: What are some of the advantages of participating in a regular exercise program?

A: **I can't think of one, sorry.**

My philosophy is 'No pain' ... Good!

Q: Aren't fried foods bad for you?

A: YOU ARE NOT LISTENING! Food is fried in vegetable oil.

How can getting more vegetables be bad?

Q: Is chocolate bad for me?

A: Are you crazy?!? **HEL-LO-O!!** Cocoa bean! Another vegetable!

It's the best feel-good food around!

Q: Is swimming good for your figure?

A: If swimming is good for the figure, **explain a whale to me.**

Q: Is getting in shape important for my lifestyle?

A: Hey! **'Round' is also a shape!**

Finally the Doctor summed up: "Look Sir, life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to:

"Skid in sideways - Beer in one hand - Chocolate in the other - Body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming "WOO-HOO, What a ride my life was"!!!!!"

Eat whatever you like because you will still DIE, don't allow motivational speakers to deceive you.

And Remember -

1. The inventor of the treadmill had died by the age of 54.
2. The inventor of modern gymnastics died at the age of 57.
3. The world bodybuilding champion died at the age of 41.
4. The best footballer in the world, Maradona, died at the age of 60.

BUT ALSO

5. The KFC inventor died at 94.
6. Inventor of Nutella brand died at the age of 88.
7. Imagine, cigarette maker Winston died at the age of 102!
8. The inventor of opium died at the age of 116 - in an earthquake.
9. Hennessey inventor died at 98.

And how did some doctors come to the conclusion that exercise prolongs life?

The rabbit is always jumping up and down, but it lives for only 2 years – and the turtle that doesn't exercise at all lives for 400 years.

**So, take some Rest, Chill, Stay cool, Eat, Drink and enjoy your life.
You will still die, but in a happier frame of mind.**

Share this with a friend who needs a good laugh!



And finally

God Save Our King!

