



PROBUS RECORDER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET
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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – Colin Chamberlain

It only seems a couple of weeks since I had to write notes for the last issue of the Recorder so here is a new offering. Firstly, I hope the Editor has no more photos of me from the last Christmas dinner - however good they are!

Given how hot it has been, I am surprised to see how everything in the garden has grown, including the fabulous display of roses, but now my non-favourite Crab Apple tree thinks it is already Autumn and is continually shedding its leaves every time the wind blows. It will soon be bald, and I hope that this year it has little fruit, not like last year when the crop was exceptional. To those of you who have never had the misfortune to own a Crab Apple tree, you would not believe the mess the little apples make when they go from rock hard to squashy soft on the garden and under your feet once they have dropped.

This brings me to another gardening related problem. As most of you know, we put our house on the market back in February and, believing we would be moving later in the year, the garden was left to its own devices. Unfortunately, we lost our buyer and, due to unforeseen circumstances, we decided to take the house off the market, which meant I have had to set to and repair, replace, renew or repaint in the heat all the things I had left for the new owner to do.

Thankfully the dandelions and daisies mentioned in last month's notes seem to have run their course, only to be replaced by clover and little purple flowers which also have the ability to duck under the cutting blade when mowing the lawn. Never mind, we're past the longest day and at the speed this year is going, it will soon be Christmas!

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare – John Owen

There is very little to update members on this month other than to say that Peter Bonson is still languishing in Salisbury Hospital, but Freda is hopeful that Peter will be home soon. Various supportive items have been delivered to help Freda cope with Peter once he is home, and they are both desperate to get him back home as soon as possible.

You may be aware that our Chairman's wife Enid is undergoing her own challenging health treatment, which means a lot of travelling to and from Salisbury Hospital. Our very best wishes go to both Colin and Enid.

The only other concerns I am aware of are:

1. Nick Hall losing his balance and crashing into furniture on one of his nocturnal visits to the loo, and -
2. My own attempt to revisit my gymnastics training as I tumbled off, and destroyed, my

step ladders while cutting the grapevine over a pergola with my electric, long arm trimmer!

Thankfully we both survived and are now a little wiser!!

So, as the duty officer in Hill Street Blues (American Cop Show) used to say,

"Hey. Remember, let's be careful out there!"

And finally -

Some American Politicians Views on Marriage

1. After marriage, a husband and wife become both sides of the same coin. They stay together but just can't face each other! *Al Gore.*
2. I had some words with my wife, and she had some sentences with me! *Bill Clinton.*
3. A good wife always forgives her husband when she's wrong! *Barack Obama.*

Social - Future Club Events in July - Editor

5 th July 2023	<i>Visit to Bere Marsh Farm, Shillingstone</i>
11 th July 2023	<i>'Barnes Wallis and the Dambusters'</i> Colin Higgs
25 th July 2023	<i>'Solving the Longitude Problem'</i> Mike Rendell <i>Plus</i> Lunch – The Royal Chase, Shaftesbury (12.30 for 1.00pm)



REPORTS ON OUR JUNE TALKS

‘An imaginary interview with the artist John Constable’ – explaining the artist’s connection with Gillingham.

Sam Woodcock 13th June 2023

Sam Woodcock stood in at short notice to present a talk with PowerPoint illustrations, about the landscape artist John Constable (1776-1837), explaining how this Suffolk man came to visit this part of North Dorset. Constable is well known in this area for painting a view of Gillingham Town Bridge, and of Parhams (Purns) Mill in 1823.

The talk took the form of an imagined conversation between John Constable (Sam Woodcock) and the interviewer (John Owen). This report summarises the information imparted at this imaginary interview.

Constable's family were millers and wealthy corn merchants in Suffolk, owning several mills in the area; their main property at Flatford Mill in East Bergholt is where John was born and spent his childhood. John was a budding young artist, and at the age of 22 was introduced to the rector of the nearby village of Langham.



The Constable family were friendly with the Curate at Langham, the Reverend Brook Horlock, but the Rector himself - Dr John Fisher - who had several 'livings' elsewhere, only made a rare appearance in the parish. So, it was only in 1798 that Constable first made the acquaintance of the Rector, who was also master of St John's College, Cambridge, and was the tutor of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent (the father of Queen Victoria). As a result, Fisher expressed an interest in Constable's artistic efforts, and gave him a letter of introduction to the Royal Academy of Art.

Later - in 1807 - Dr Fisher was appointed Bishop of Salisbury, and Constable was invited to visit, which he did for the first time in 1811, followed by subsequent visits. Constable sketched and subsequently painted views of the Cathedral and surrounding water meadows.



The Fishers were welcoming hosts, and accompanied him in exploring the area, including Stonehenge and Stourhead. During that time Constable met and formed a lifetime friendship with another John, the Bishop's nephew John Fisher, a gifted amateur artist. Nephew John, after graduating from Christ's College, Cambridge, was ordained by his uncle and appointed as Rector at Idmiston, about 6 miles northeast of Salisbury in Wiltshire.

in 1815 John Constable married Maria Bicknell at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London at which his friend John Fisher conducted the ceremony. The honeymoon was spent with the Fishers at Osmington, a village on the Jurassic Coast 4 miles north-east of Weymouth, where John Fisher had been appointed Vicar. Whilst still retaining the living at Osmington, the Reverend Fisher was subsequently appointed as Vicar of Gillingham in 1819 (a lucrative living worth £1,000 a

year) and was also appointed Archdeacon of Berkshire (then part of the Salisbury Diocese) with these appointments enabling him to acquire a house in the Salisbury Cathedral close.

The Constable family stayed at the Salisbury residence in 1820, with the first of seven children having been born by then. As a result of their being established in Gillingham, the Fishers invited Constable to visit them at the vicarage. Fisher and Constable spent a long weekend in Gillingham vicarage, when Constable made several sketches, and in 1823 John Constable returned to Gillingham for a month's stay, when he completed an oil painting of Gillingham town bridge, and sketches of Parhams (Purns) mill.



This imaginary interview was a novel way of explaining Constable's connection with Gillingham, which was supplemented by the illustrations of some of his paintings. The Chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs

‘The Dean Martin Story’

Chris Walker – 27 June 2023

Chris Walker is well versed in the music scene and is a talented musician and musical director. This talk about the singer, comedian, and actor Dean Martin is one of a number of Chris's talks on the themes from The Great American Song Book. The film clips from various acts, shows and films showed how versatile Dean Martin was, and how this developed over his career.



Dean Martin (1917-1995) was born Dino Crocetti in the US state of Ohio, to an Italian father and Italian-American mother. His first language was Italian, and he spoke no English until he started school. As a teenager, he played drums as a hobby. Dropping out of high school early, he bootlegged liquor, worked in a steel mill, and also worked as a croupier. More than that, he was a boxer, boxing at welter weight until becoming a roulette stickman and croupier at an illegal casino.

When working in the casino, Dino sang with local bands, calling himself Dino Martini, and developing a crooning style. At the end of 1940 he was singing for the Cleveland bandleader Sammy Watkins, who suggested changing his name to Dean Martin. Martin married his first

wife Elizabeth (Betty) in 1941, with whom he had four children. After divorce in 1949 he married Jeanne, which lasted until 1972 (three more children). His third marriage, to Catherine only lasted three years.



Martin's career really took off when he formed a decade-long partnership with the comedian Jerry Lewis in 1946; combining slapstick comedy with songs; they made it to television in 1948 on the *Ed Sullivan show*. A radio series started in the following year, which was when Martin and Lewis signed with *Paramount* as comedy relief for the movie *'My friend Irma'*. The contract allowed them to do one outside film a year, which they could produce through their own production company. However, the team broke up acrimoniously 8 years later in 1956.

After this break-up, Martin's solo career started with a failure in the box office (*'Ten Thousand Bedrooms'*), but gradually his film acting took off, and he starred alongside Frank Sinatra in *'Some came Running'*. By the mid 1960's Martin was an established star in film, recording, television and nightclub media. In addition to teaming up with Sinatra in several more movies, he worked with other well-known stars, including Burt Lancaster, this time in the 1970's film drama *'Airport'*.

Martin's cool singing style had developed over the years, and his signature tune *'Everybody loves somebody'* knocked the Beatles' *'A hard day's night'* off the Number One spot in the USA in 1964. He had formed a friendship with Sinatra, and in the 1960's - along with friends Joey Bishop, Peter Lawford, and Sammy Davis Jnr, formed the group known as the *Rat Pack*, making films together, and being part of the Hollywood social scene, as well as being well known for appearing in Las Vegas.

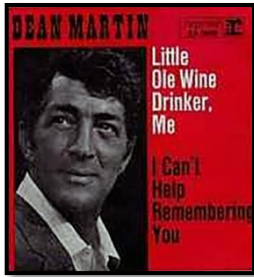


In 1965, Martin launched the weekly NBC comedy series, *The Dean Martin Show*, which ran until 1974. Despite his reputation as a drinker his alcohol use was quite disciplined, and when on stage with a drink in hand, it was actually apple juice!

In 1976 there was a public reconciliation with Jerry Lewis, when Sinatra brought the two former partners together on a charity fundraising show.

Always a heavy smoker, Dean Martin succumbed to lung cancer, dying of respiratory failure in 1995.

The musical and comedy clips featuring Dean Martin during the talk were enjoyable, where his easy crooning style was apparent in the song 'Little ole wine drinker, me').



Following questions, the Chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs



ENDPIECE – Editor

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Maclaren retired from the British Army in 2001 after a long and fulfilling career. On the day that he retired he received a letter from the Personnel Department of the Ministry of Defence setting out details of his pension and, in particular, the tax-free 'lump sum' award, (based upon completed years of service), that he would receive in addition to his monthly pension.

The letter read,

Dear Lieutenant Colonel Maclaren,

We write to confirm that you retired from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards on 1st March 2001 at the rank of Lt Colonel, having been commissioned at Edinburgh Castle as a 2nd Lieutenant on 1st February 1366.

Accordingly your lump sum payment, based on years served, has been calculated as £68,500.

You will receive a cheque for this amount in due course.

*Yours sincerely,
Army Paymaster*

Lieutenant Colonel Maclaren replied.

Dear Paymaster,

Thank you for your recent letter confirming that I served as an officer in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards between 1st February 1366 and 1st March 2001 – a total period of 635 years and 1 month.

I note however that you have calculated my lump sum to be £68,500, which seems to be considerably less than it should be bearing in mind my length of service since I received my commission from King Edward III.

By my calculation, allowing for interest payments and currency fluctuations, my lump sum should actually be £6,427,586,619.47p.

I look forward to receiving a cheque for this amount in due course.

*Yours sincerely,
Robert Maclaren (Lt. Col. Retd.)*

A month passed by and then in early April, a stout manila envelope from the Ministry of Defence in Edinburgh dropped through Lieutenant Colonel Maclaren's letter box, it read:

Dear Lieutenant Colonel Maclaren,

We have reviewed the circumstances of your case as outlined in your recent letter to us dated 8th March. We do indeed confirm that you were commissioned into the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards by King Edward III at Edinburgh Castle on 1st February 1366, and that you served continuously for the following 635 years and 1 month.

We have re-calculated your pension and have pleasure in confirming that the lump sum payment due to you is indeed £6,427,586,619.47p.

However, we also note that according to our records you are the only surviving officer who had command responsibility during the following campaigns and battles:

The Wars of the Roses 1455 -1485 (Including the battles of Bosworth Field, Barnet and Towton).

The Civil War 1642 -1651 (Including the battles of Edge Hill, Naseby and the conquest of Ireland).

The Napoleonic War 1803 – 1815 (including the Peninsular War and the battle of Waterloo).

The Crimean War (1853 – 1856) (including the battle of Sevastopol and the Charge of the Light Brigade).

The Boer War (1899 -1902),

World Wars I and II (including the battles of the Somme, El Alamein and the invasion of Normandy).

We therefore wish to know what happened to the following, which do not appear to have been returned to Stores by you on completion of operations:

- 9765 Cannon*
- 26,785 Swords*
- 12,889 Pikes*
- 127,345 Rifles (with bayonets)*
- 28,987 horses (fully kitted)*
- Plus three complete marching bands with instruments and banners.*

We have calculated the total cost of these items and they amount to £6,427,518,119.47p. We have therefore subtracted this from your lump sum, leaving a residual amount of £68,500, for which you will receive a cheque in due course.

*Yours sincerely,
Army Paymaster*

