



The Probus Club of Berwick-upon-Tweed

Communication from: Homer Lindsay
17 Cornwall Avenue
Berwick-upon-Tweed,
TD15 2NX.

Tel: 07749 458484
homer@thelindsays.info

Welcome to our *'It's good to stay in touch'* Newsletter ~

2nd April 2020

Hello everyone. I hope you are all keeping well; staying home and following the rules to avoid Coronavirus. Please let us all know how you are and how you are coping – please give permission to share your update with members (email probusofberwick@gmail.com).

If you are anything like me, you'll be missing our Wednesday morning meetings. I've launched this newsletter as an alternative but temporary way of keeping in touch. Frequency will depend on how well it is received by members, though I imagine monthly. Most of us have email addresses so it will be distributed electronically. The five or so members using 'snail-mail' will have a copy posted to them.

Please see this as a two-way communication. I am inviting everyone to consider sending ideas and content for future editions; large or small contributions, about you, about your experiences, about how you feel in these difficult times or about a topic you are passionate about. This could well be a prelude to a talk given by you at a future Probus meeting!

In this inaugural issue, Ian Hannah has shared some cartoon-sayings that he likes; he also relates some of the ways he is keeping himself entertained during the lockdown. David Mumford has contributed sources for business opening times which are reproduced for reference (in a separate attachment) and Colin Wakeling provides warnings of potential scams to watch out for. George Martin reflects on isolation.

As a member of the U3A Creative Writing Group, I have written many short fictional stories and as a distraction, I have included one, a little out of season, but I hope you



will enjoy it. Alan Dumble has agreed to provide one of his fictional pieces for the next edition.

Dr Jimmy Mitchell's "Hand-hewn Stone"

It is more than two weeks since our last Probus Meeting but with the strict rules under which we must now live it feels much, much longer. That meeting on 18th March, with eleven members, but no coffee or tea, was quite memorable because of the impromptu entertaining and informative talk delivered by Dr Jimmy Mitchell.

He introduced us to "a hand-hewn stone ball" (right) which had been in Jimmy's garden for over 50 years. It was following a previous talk in Probus from an historian that his stone came to mind and he started to wonder about its origins.

The story of the Stone:

Jimmy's narrative took us from the 1296 Massacre of Berwick when Edward 1st beat the Scottish Nobles; to the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314; then Robert the Bruce laid siege to Berwick in 1317 leading to the recapture of Berwick in 1318. But what of this stone? One of "the engines of war" used in these times was a large machine – a catapult - designed to throw heavy projectiles from a spoon-shaped structure at the end of its arm, capable of ranges up to 1300 feet. Aimed from Berwick's walls these would have had a terrible effect on the enemy forces on the ship in the Tweed carrying enemy forces, especially if one of

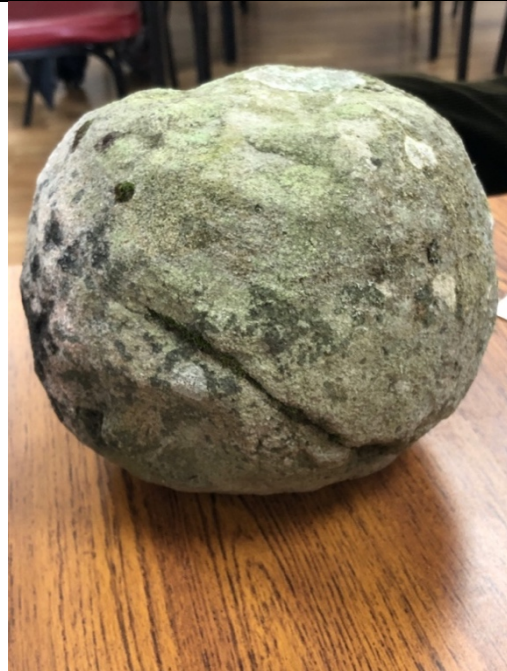
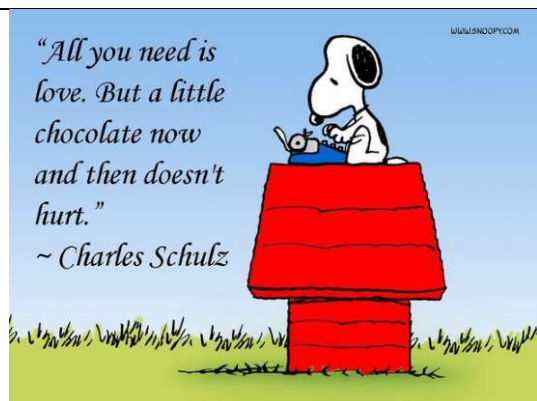


Figure 1 Dr Jimmy Mitchell's 'hand-hewn stone'

these projectiles were Jimmy's rough hand-hewn stone.



I was talking to **Ian Hannah** the other day and asked him how he was getting on.

"Fine," he said, "I was playing dominoes with a lady from North Shields yesterday."

"Was that wise?" I asked, "Do you think that was essential travel?"

He laughed, "I was playing on the internet. I play this lady at 4 o'clock every day. You can play other people online at all kinds of games; scrabble, bridge, whist, canasta. Just go to pogo.com and sign up for a free account."

I thought I knew everything about the internet!

Wash your hands of coronavirus scams!

Friends Against Scams aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams.

Be aware of people offering or selling:

- Virus testing kits - these are only offered by NHS.
- Vaccines or miracle cures - there is currently no vaccine or cure.
- Overpriced or fake goods to protect yourself from coronavirus such as anti-bacterial products.
- Shopping or medication collection services.
- Home decontamination services.

Protect yourself and others:

- Don't be rushed into making a decision. If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.
- Only purchase goods and services from legitimate retailers and take a moment to think before parting with money or personal information.
- Don't assume everyone is genuine. It's okay to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.
- If someone claims to represent a charity, ask them for ID. Be suspicious of requests for money up front. If someone attempts to pressurise you into accepting a service they are unlikely to be genuine. Check with family and friends before accepting offers of help if you are unsure.

Be a good friend, help to protect your family, friends and neighbours from scams.

Read it. Share it. Prevent it.

#Coronavirus
#ScamAware



Contact
For advice on scams call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **0808 223 11 33**
To report a scam call Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**
Contact your bank if you think you have been scammed.

NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS

Scams Team

To learn more about the different types of scams visit www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk

<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

The Problems of Coronavirus

By George Martin

Since the advent of Coronavirus and its subsequent forcing of incarceration of people in their houses it has caused many problems. These problems come mainly under the headings of getting food for the elderly and prevention of boredom.

Val and I, being both in our late eighties, and using ready-made meals quite frequently, stocked up our freezer well in advance of being 'shut in'. We do need, of course, regular supplies of milk and bread and other essentials. My son, David, very kindly offered to get these items for us, and leaves them at our back door.

On trying to keep ourselves interested and amused Val and I took different paths. We are both Bridge players and, while I have converted to internet Bridge (BBO) at least 3 times per week Val has not taken to the internet Bridge, having difficulty with adjusting to the keyboard. Val prefers the company and chat at the Bridge table itself more than the Bridge itself, while I am not really a chatty person! Netflix and Amazon Prime are Val's 'internet bridge'.

With the weather being very good at the moment we have both managed to get into our 'garden' (patio patch!) with Val cutting our

<p>handkerchief lawn and some weeding while I have started to prune our climbing roses.</p> <p>We have had one big boo-boo with food delivery. I made out a list on the computer of all the things that we sometimes buy during the month or weeks. We can then tick off what we want to get. It can also act as a reminder for us. I printed out the first list and ticked what was needed. I then e-mailed the list to my son's phone for him to get the items for us.</p>	<p>When he phoned to say he was dumping everything ordered at our back door we got rather a shock! What he had done was get everything on that list with the result we ended up with 2 huge shopping bags of items. I was not too popular with Val!! We will certainly not need to order anything for quite a while!</p> <p>I think that it is very important that those who are housebound MUST have an interest to be able to keep sane.</p>
--	--

Christmas is over

A short story: by ©Homer Lindsay

The Christmas party went on for three whole days and nights in the Old Naval College in Greenwich, below which are the foundations of one of the largest and most important Tudor palaces in England, Greenwich Palace, the birthplace of Henry Tudor. The phenomenal cost of this three-day extravaganza was funded by a secretive billionaire oligarch, thought to be Egyptian. Only the very rich and famous or royalty could ever have aspired to be on the guest list.



The invitation stated that guests should attend in the guise of a famous historical character and come with a banker's draft of no less than £100,000. All proceeds were to be

donated to charities operating between Berwick in the North East and Greenwich in the south.

There were hundreds of guests and no one could tell who they really were despite the ingenuity of the press. They had to be content reporting on the characters who were being represented. The headline judged best appeared on the front page of the Guardian was “Charles 1st loses his head over spat with Christine Keeler.”

All the top super stars were there to provide continuous entertainment in every public room of the college. A medieval banquet was laid out in the Painted Hall; the tables were kept ever laden by Centurion soldiers drafted in from Pinewood Studios. Wine flowed freely from barrels which were being filled from a large jug of water by a tall, barefoot man with long hair and piercing blue eyes, dressed in a long flowing white robe.

It was as the excitement was growing on the second evening that Fidel Castro appeared at the top of the grand stairs. He had an enormous cigar in his mouth, but he did not look happy. He appeared to be looking for someone. You wouldn't think this was the kind of place or surroundings that would be the natural habitat of a communist revolutionary, but it takes all types of people to make a world.

“What ails you my man?” said this rather portly gentleman as he bit into the leg of a goose; cooked, of course.

“I can't find anyone to give me a light,” said Fidel, “surely someone can light my cigar. Do you like Cuban cigars, sir?”

“I cannot help you; I usually have servants to do all that stuff for me, but I seem to have landed here without them. This place seems awfully familiar; I have this sense that I have risen up from something or somewhere. May I know your name, sir?”

“Fidel Castro at your service. Master of revolutions. And you?”

“Henry, Henry VIII that is. King. King of England.”

“Don't they have a Queen, now? Elizabeth II?”

“Yes, I'm a distant relative. About 500 years distant.”

Cool. I'm a ruler too, of Cuba. Have you heard of it?”

“I regret to say, no, sir; that was well after my time? Have you perchance seen any of my wives? I was hoping to spot my favourite, Jane Seymour. Do you think she is here?”

“I do not know, but perhaps I can introduce you to Cleo. She is a charming lady. Here she comes now. Cleo may I introduce you to Henry?”

Cleopatra turned and stepped toward the pair, eyeing the large man, her smouldering eyes taking in every detail of his person.”

“Do not approach me unless you are of noble upbringing. Fidel, please stop calling me Cleo!”

“He’s a King, Cleo. Henry, Cleopatra is a Queen of Egypt. She’s been looking for a couple of her friends, too.”

Henry offered his hand to the lady saying, “Honoured to make your acquaintance your Majesty. I may have an opening for you in my household. Would you be free for a ceremony in Greenwich Palace, I’m sure the Archbishop will be available to officiate; it is not far. I have a great sense that seven may be my lucky number.”

“Alas, Sir, I have Julius Caesar and Mark Antony as my lovers. Have you met them?” she replied.

“When did you last see them?” asked Fidel.

“About 2050 years ago. I was sure they’d be here. After all, the host of this party is a family member, a cousin, about four hundred times removed. Do they have any asses here? I am feeling in need of a bath.”

Alas, there were no asses, except those of the political classes. The new acquaintances were miserable as none of their cravings were being met. They walked towards the Painted Hall in search of their hearts’ desires. As they passed the large mirrors there was a stirring amongst the other guests. Many showed fear, others amazement...

There were no reflections in the mirrors of the three friends.

Was this Newsletter worthwhile? Your feedback would be appreciated, along with suggestions and contributions for future editions during the COVID-19 crisis. Contact details on page 1.