



The Probus Club of Berwick-upon-Tweed



Welcome to our 'It's Good to stay in touch'
Newsletter –

Issue 3 – 13th May 2020

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Dear Member,

We are well into the eighth week of lockdown and there are encouraging signs that we are “past the peak.” Variations on the rules of lockdown are being introduced this week which hopefully will not too adversely affect the infection rate. None of these are likely to refer to members of Probos, however. We must continue to **Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives.**

There have been a lot of “Lockdown” diaries submitted from members for the Newsletter, so I have attempted to integrate them into one feature. I hope the authors will not mind my treatment of their work.

Do you know what a Bridge Director is? It has nothing to do with bridges, nor does it have a naval connotation as far as I know you. George Martin reminisces about becoming a Bridge Director and tour guide on his first assignment, an overseas tournament.

Colin Wakeling is marooned on Heligoland while researching air raids in Northumberland.

Ian Hannah has been reading old paperbacks and shares his interest in General Custer’s last stand.

Who Said?

"Happiness is not a possession to be prized, it is a quality of thought, a state of mind."

Answer on page 7 of the newsletter

HL

Email from Harry Wilson

I trust we all enjoyed our wallow in nostalgia on and around VE Day 75. To me the most moving moments were the recording of the King's BBC Broadcast which amazingly I can't recall hearing before. Sadly, I don't have any memories of VE Day itself (although I would have been at the local Infants' School). Some time after I do remember the distribution of some of the contents of the school air raid shelters (we all got a tin of Horlicks tablets and some barley sugar sweets). I must have been focussed on food from an early age as most of my memories relate to the arrival of food parcels (we got fairly irregular contributions of butter and sugar from my mother's brother in India and more welcome to me, supplies of bubble gum, tinned pork sausages and tinned peaches from our former housekeeper who had gone back to the US as soon as she could after the War).

Best Wishes, Harry



Marooned on Heligoland *by Colin Wakeling*

Following up research into air raids on Northumberland during the First World War, a visit to the Zeppelin Museum at Nordholz, from where the raids were launched, was called for. Hence, we arrived on the German North Sea Coast and explored. Our landlady indicated a visit to Heligoland where they still had 'duty free' was a 'must'.

Although, we recognised little more than the name from the shipping forecast, the island itself has had a chequered history. Danish until 1807 when Britain occupied it to breach Napoleon's 'Continental System', and retained after his defeat, the island was often a haven for liberal Germans escaping more restrictive conditions on the mainland and soon became something of a 'resort'. However, the Royal Navy never developed a base there and in 1890, in exchange for Zanzibar, it passed to the German Empire which was developing its High Seas Fleet and valued its strategic and military potential. The island's population was evacuated during the First World War and in the latter stages of World War II.

After the German surrender in 1945 the Royal Navy decided the island should be blown up and assembled 6,700 tons of surplus explosives for Operation Big Bang. When the debris settled the island remained defiant.



1 Heligoland now; the crater is still a feature of the island

It was then the turn of the RAF to use it as a bombing range; the evidence is still clear to see, but with no more success, and by the 1950s the original inhabitants were determined to return and rebuild.

Thus we sailed from Cuxhaven on 'MV Seute Deern', a venerable vessel four decades old, but with a healthy sounding engine, on a bright and breezy autumn day. Clear of the coast, the sea became rougher, and when items began falling off shelving, extra sick bags were distributed. Despite oily smells from the engine room, we did not have to make use of them by keeping our attention focused on the horizon. This was becoming an adventure.

After a light lunch ashore, we negotiated the path to the level summit where the remnants of the bomb craters from the RAF's sorties were much in evidence and where large numbers of migratory birds chattered incessantly. Exercise over, we hastened to the Duty Free and clanked our way happily back to the boat.

There, euphoria rapidly evaporated, as a policeman at the top of the gangway firmly indicated the sailing had been cancelled because of the weather and phlegmatically suggested we find somewhere to stay.



Marooned on Heligoland, *continued*...

Back along the quayside, we came across another policeman who obliged by yelling across to a whelk stall owner who not only offered us a self-catering attic apartment but would even call us at 6 am in time for the boat's departure – we had not packed an alarm clock, or anything else for that matter!

Stocking up with a selection of cold meats, bread rolls, pastries, and, of course ample cans, we settled down for the evening – a surreal, Gotterdammerung, experience with thunder accompanied by hail stones battering the roof lights and forked lightning crashing down seawards to the south, all the while with an old episode of Benny Hill, implausibly dubbed into German

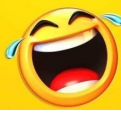
Come the dawn our hostess was as good as her word and knocked us up in time for the trek back to the boat for the delayed, but uneventful, voyage back to Cuxhaven. Returning to base our landlady marvelled that we'd spent the night in Scotland – not having her phone number I had contacted my eldest son in Edinburgh – German 'O' Grade under his belt. He'd dutifully looked up online and made contact to let her know we had not gone AWOL – his message must have lost something in translation. And I even made a pre-arranged appointment at the Zeppelin Museum.

Since then Heligoland has meant more than the shipping forecast. It's good to travel, but even better to arrive, eventually!

Colin Wakeling

on the TV.



<p>I ASKED MY GRANDPA, "AFTER 65 YEARS, YOU STILL CALL GRANDMA DARLING, BEAUTIFUL, AND HONEY. WHAT'S THE SECRET?" HE SAID, "I FORGOT HER NAME 5 YEARS AGO AND I'M SCARED TO ASK HER."</p> 	<p>Picked up a hitch-hiker. Seemed like a nice guy. After a few miles, he asked me if I wasn't afraid that he might be a serial killer? I told him that the odds of two serial killers being in the same car were extremely unlikely</p>
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Life in Lockdown

An amalgam of reports on isolation from Probus Berwick Members

We all want to hear how members are coping in lockdown; the feature article on the following page presents a view of life as shared by **Kevin Golding, Phil Reynolds and Michael Wright**, with a smidgeon of input from yours truly. The common themes are delivered once while the unique elements of their experiences have a light shone on them.



Life in Lockdown....

One of the lesser casualties of COVID-19 and the lockdown is travel and many found that their booked holidays to foreign parts were cancelled; as did **Michael** who was going to Florida on Easter Monday with daughter and family. Better to have it curtailed before leaving the UK than be stranded whilst on resort! Thankfully he succeeded in getting a refund without penalty; many since are being offered credit notes and vouchers instead of cash, illegally I believe.

Kevin's wife, Rosie, has taken back control of dishwasher and tumbler dryer while he retains responsibility for the washing machine. Is demarcation a consequence of enforced lockdown, I ask myself?

Phil received his NHS 'vulnerable' letter last week and so is now confined to barracks for 12 weeks. He and Alyson are coping well with local shops in Ford and Wooler delivering fresh food, eggs and all the basics of life. The local pub at Millfield is doing home deliveries of take-out meals and they are working their way through the menu! Phil has baked their bread since retiring in 2000 and will continue as long as supplies of flour and yeast are maintained. Their medical needs are looked after by their daughter who is one of the 750,000 NHS Volunteer Responders. Good for her!

Michael: We've all had to get used the slower pace of life of "lockdown" in Berwick. In truth, we're quite enjoying it although I'm the first to recognise that we have the space, money, access to the internet etc to do so. How I would feel if we lived in a small flat in an urban tower block with young children, had lost our jobs etc, I'm not sure.

What I am sure about is that these weeks will change some aspects of our behaviour

forever. Whilst many things will return to "normal", I think there will be a radical reappraisal of work patterns. Organisations may well decide that they don't need expensive city centre offices and business travel will be reduced. I remember that 30+ years ago it was said that modern communication methods would reduce business travel (especially use of air travel from Scotland to London) but it didn't happen because people realised that work is partly a social activity. It may be different this time as we have discovered that "online meetings" actually work. This crisis may also result in people giving up social kissing and similar greetings, but I think (and hope) the firm handshake will return!!! I'm not sure what other changes will outlast the return to "normality" but no doubt some will.

Daily exercise is important; **Kevin's** family is shielding so raises heartrate by chasing their schnoodle around the garden while **Phil** walks up Flodden Hill, which they seem to have to themselves.

All are embracing technology to one extent or another, connecting with family & friends via Skype, Zoom, Facetime and Whatsapp.

Michael and **Kevin** have been watching historical football matches according to their allegiances.

Kevin has been watching Sunday Night at the original London Palladium on the Talking Pictures channel (Freesat channel 328, Freeview channel 81).

'We are all missing the camaraderie of Probus and look forward to the day we can all meet up again'.

Best Wishes to you all

Kevin, Phil and Michael.



Reminiscing while incarcerated *by George Martin*

In the situation we are in at the moment I find that we are reminiscing a lot more about the past.

When I retired, I did not want to just sit and do nothing. I was given the opportunity to become a Bridge Director overseas and grabbed it. Having been on Bridge holidays abroad previously it was something that made me say to myself, "I would like to do that, being a Director," (paid for holidays abroad doing only 3-4 hours work a day!). I needed to get my Advanced Directors Certificate. I took this exam over a weekend at Falkirk where they not only tested my Bridge knowledge on the rules but how to cope with difficult situations, plus a test on stamina. I passed with flying colours but not with some difficulty. For stamina I had to work late on the Saturday evening (after midnight) then get an early call on the Sunday (before 6 a.m.) to undertake some difficult questions. Unfortunately, the bed had bedbugs and I was covered in itchy spots making life rather difficult!!

My very first holiday was at Mijas (just above Fuenguerola in Spain). I was able to produce a handsome full colour brochure free gratis for the holiday company through 'Martin's' and their suppliers! Twenty-four players signed up. I hired a bus from Berwick and picked up clients from Berwick, Dunbar, North Berwick and Edinburgh with some coming from afar themselves. It was at the time where computer scoring had just started and I carefully guarded my laptop separate from my luggage putting it in the luggage rack above my head on the bus. All the other luggage went into the bottom of the bus.

At Glasgow Airport, trying to be helpful I assisted everyone to get a trolley for their luggage, my wife looking after our cases. When everyone was off, I asked the driver if he had checked if there was any luggage left on the bus and he said 'No'. When I got to the doors of the Airport I suddenly remembered my laptop was still on the Bus! I rushed back to see the bus turning on to the motorway! A policeman was at the entrance and I asked if he could contact the police to get the Bus to return with my laptop. He tried without success. This meant that I would have to manually do all the Bridge scoring!!

It was a lovely old-fashioned hotel that I knew would please everyone. I had organised 2 Tours – one to Marbella and the millionaire's marina just along the road from there, and the other to the Mountains above Mijas. When Monday dawned and ready to board the bus for Marbella at 9 a.m. it was raining stair-rods! It would be impossible to get out of the bus. We decided instead to take the trip into the mountains above Mijas. Could anything more go wrong? You bet!!

Episode 2

It was a fairly old bus that we boarded and with all the rain the windows in the bus all misted up. This meant that we were not able to enjoy the scenery as much as intended! We passed through some pretty bleak villages and what seemed to be the top of the mountains we stopped at a remote café for coffee. When we had finished our coffees and ready to set off again I was the last person out of the café to get back into the bus. We had a Spanish courier with us



who was explaining the interests on our travels, and as we closed the bus doors, she asked me, 'Have you done a head count?' 'Head count?' I said. I hadn't a clue how many we had on the bus as some new arrivals joined us. I said that I was the last one out of the café and we were all aboard. The bus started reversing out of the café carpark when this old lady came out of the café!! She had been in the toilet!

I never made that mistake again!

The road we were on was very narrow and about a mile further on a lorry had tipped over as part of the road had given way due to all the rain! We were stuck – could not go forward nor back! All we could do was wait until the road was cleared of the tipped lorry! How much worse is this going to get?

Eventually we got going again and got back to our Hotel in time for our evening meal and Bridge. After the Bridge I could not give an instant result because of leaving my computer in the arrival Bus. I had to work out the scores manually which took over an hour.

To help an unfortunate day one of the clients invited a few of us for drinks in the Bar after the Bridge. He kept us filled with Spanish Champagne and Spanish Brandy. At midnight I said goodnight to them all and left them drinking.

The next morning the Hotel receptionist said to me that the Manager wished to see me! Seemingly one of the group had overindulged and was more or less carried to his room by the others! During the night he felt sick and went to the toilet but unfortunately fell and hurt himself. He tried

to phone me for help but could not remember my room number. He started phoning the other rooms in the hotel, waking everyone up, trying to get me!! I got quite a telling off!

In turn I had to have a 'word' with this particular guest!

Quite a start to my 'so called working holiday'!

It did get better, however. The Hotel had a bowling green and we were able to have bowling as an extra activity. Thankfully both the food and scenery were good and it was a very interesting village.

Peace at last – well not quite! It was quite a learning curve for me. I made the mistake of trying to run both Rubber Duplicate the same was and break up the group in the evening.



Come the last evening and I was asked if we could go out into Mijas to a Restaurant for our meal. I knew a very good one so it was arranged that we meet in reception at 7p.m. where I would lead the group in line to the restaurant and Val would take up the rear so that we got everyone. It was quite a distance away in Mijas and awkward to find! Of course, we got there to find 2 missing. (yes, I took a head count!). Val retraced her steps and found that the pair had dropped off into a shop!!

Who thought that it was a holiday for me!!!

George Martin



Custer's Fall, Ian Hannah has been reading David Humphreys Miller's book

I have just finished reading Custer's Fall by David Humphreys Miller. You will know how old it is when I tell you it cost 3/6d. The author visited Indian Reservations in 1935, interviewing survivors of the battle and learned many of their customs as well.

The Little Big Horn saw the largest gathering of Red Indians numbered over 20,000 and made up of two tribes the Sioux and the Cheyenne. They had gathered to celebrate a religious event. This meant that there would be over four thousand braves. Chief Sitting Bull was the overall chief.

Custer's scouts had told him there were more Indians than he had bullets but Custer being Custer chose to go ahead with his plans and not wait for the main force. On the afternoon on 24th June 1876, he ordered Major Reno and his troop to cause a diversion. Sitting Bull's scouts spotted them and raced back to the camp and informed Sitting Bull. He said that the women and children must be protected and hurriedly the braves collected their weapons, mounted their ponies and counter attacked.

The Indians said that Reno's soldiers were firing into the air and Major Reno led the survivors to a butte where they dug themselves in. Meanwhile the Indians had spotted Custer's main force and turned to intercept. Custer was among the first to die. He was only half way across the river when he was shot and fell from his horse, troops stopped and picked up his body and more and more Indians were appearing every second and I believe this had a demoralising effect on the troops. The battle or massacre only lasted twenty minutes by which time every white man had been killed, over three hundred and sixty and thirty-two Indians killed. The Indians tore up paper money and kept the dimes and nickels. Big mistake as it is believed that the officers and men would have about \$27,000, as they had just been paid two months wages. Sitting Bull claimed that it was a battle that should never have happened, because had Custer talked to them, they would have returned to their reservations peacefully.

Who Said?

"Happiness is not a possession to be prized, it is a quality of thought, a state of mind."

It was Dame Daphne du Maurier (Lady Browning) 1907 – 1989, DBE 1969, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature

who was born on 13th May 1907



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.



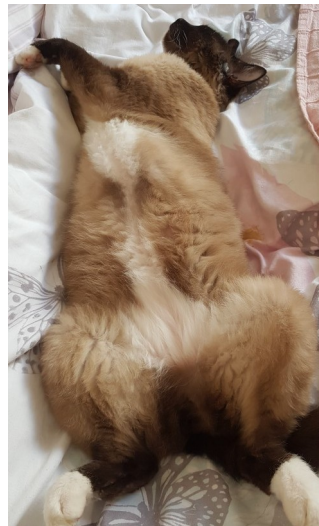
More blossom at Hiveacres



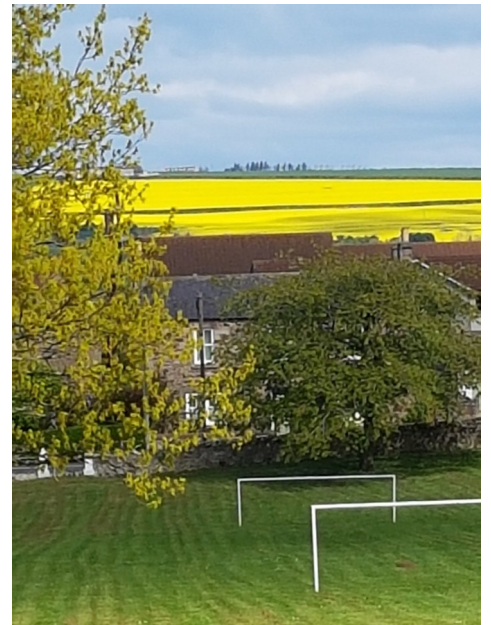
Hard work, this grass eating



East Ord



Hard work -
being a cat



East Ord Village green



One that I took a while ago but I love the reflection of the bridges on the river