



The Probus Club of Berwick-upon-Tweed

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

Issue 4 – 3rd June 2020

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Dear Member,

11 full weeks of COVID-19 lockdown. Can you believe it?

I have received a number of nice comments about the newsletter. Thank you so much for your encouragement.

In this edition, **Antony Chessell** has at last been able to get on with some restoration projects. **William Hall** reflects on the power of friendship. **Colin Wakeling** examines enclaves and their impact on the daily lives of their inhabitants. **John Harper** describes childhood memories of Lancaster bombers landing in his home village of Toab in Shetland. He was 8 years old at the time. **Kevin Golding** repurposes an old DVD recorder while **Ian Hannah** relates the story of a life-long friend.

I'd like to pay tribute to all our contributors; your stories and articles have been so interesting. A huge thank you on behalf of our members.

Homer

Who Said?

"You need to keep on doing things you have never done before in your career. You have to have a go."

Answer on last page of the newsletter

HL

Recent Birthdays

I have been forgetting to include the birthday role in these newsletters; my apologies to those whose special dates were missed in Editions 1 to 3.

Congratulations to: -

Phil Reynolds	15 th May
Denham Redfearn	16 th May
Michael Fraser	23 rd May
Michael Wright	24 th May

Nominations for Treasurer sought

Charles Fairfield has been our Treasurer for many years, but his recent illness has forced him to resign. Our grateful thanks, Charles, for a responsibility superbly executed.

The Power of Friendship

William Hall recalls the many friends he



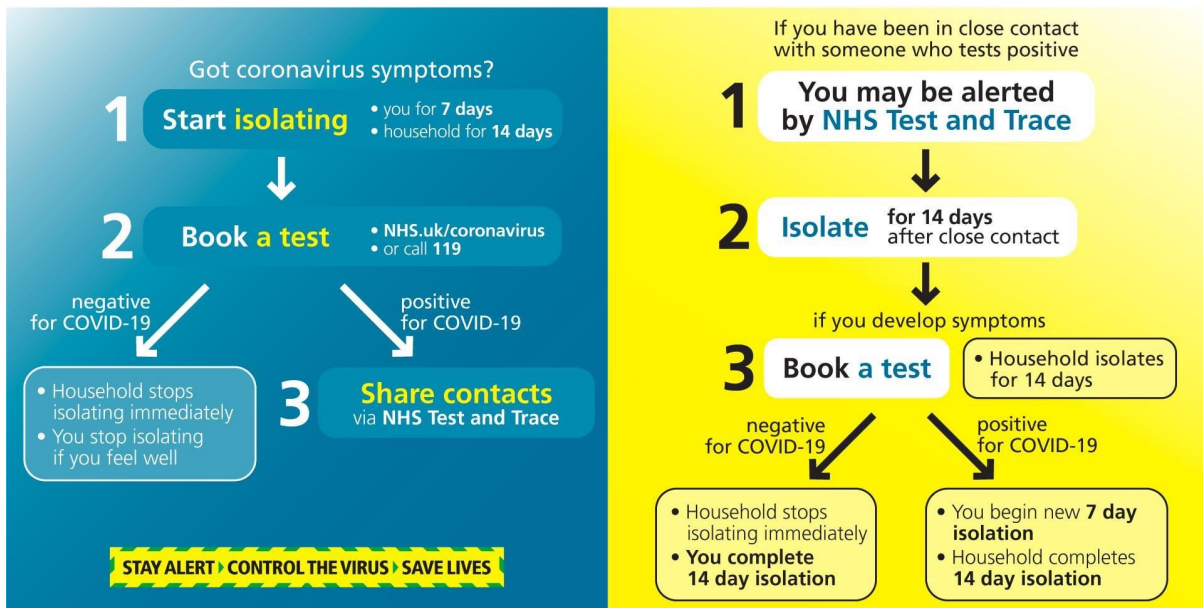
Celebrations: Isabel & William at their Golden Wedding (5 years ago)

& Isabel have made over 25 or more years as regulars on the Church Walk; they'd meet up at 10:00am. Their first was a long walk through Kyloe woods, picnic half-way, chat and rest. "No blisters recorded."

Many of those friends have kept in touch and all have sent good wishes since Isabel went into hospital, then care home, where she has settled well into this new way of life imposed by the coronavirus pandemic.

William, himself, has also adjusted to life on his own, "I changed my small vegetable garden into an herbaceous plot, and have gradually been preparing a raised bed for parsnips, carrots, spinach and courgettes. A big job but it will save my back a little when I harvest them."

He looks forward to phone calls from friends in Alnwick, Warkworth and their camping friends from Wales, who also write to Isabel.



© Homer Lindsay

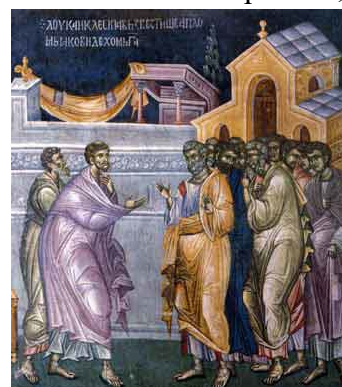
ENCLAVE EXISTENCE

© Colin Wakeling

Living in our area we should be well aware of enclaves (parcels of land surrounded by alien territory). After all, in the 16th and 17th Centuries, Berwick was “of the Kingdom (of England) but not in it”, and, until the 1844 Counties (Detached Parts) Act, Northumberland and Islandshire were regarded as an isolated part of the County of Durham.

This might have led to some administrative inconvenience but was hardly a life changer, so consider the situation in Kosovo, where, thanks to ethnic and religious tensions between its Albanian and Serb communities, a number of semi-autonomous Serb municipalities, surrounded by Albanian areas, have been created.

I visited one of these, Gračanica, home to some 10,000 inhabitants, and a mere 10 km, and €0.50 bus ride from the Kosovan capital, Pristina, during a ‘jaunt’ in the area in July 2016. The town is not recognised as a destination at the City’s Bus Station, since it lies on the route to the Albanian community of Gjilan.



Leaving Pristina’s nondescript suburbs one warm afternoon, there were no longer UN soldiers on patrol, but the bus had to pull up and be recognised before continuing through this Serb Commune.

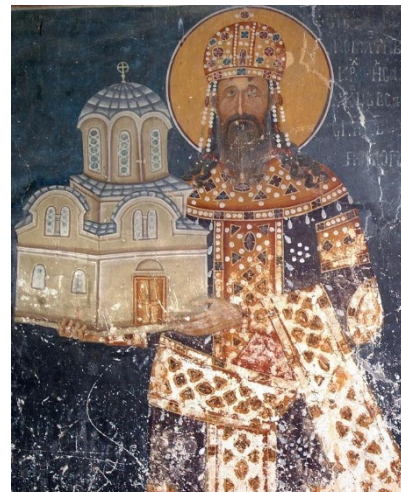
At least there is no longer a UN / KFOR checkpoint there. The bus stopped in the main street opposite the Monastery, famous for its 14th Century frescos, the object of my visit. Close encounters with culture require stamina replenishing refreshment first. When I had first arrived I was aware of a distinctly different air to the place, with Euro (the currency of Kosovo) foreign exchange booths, and a Serb flag flying from the roundabout beside a



statue of Miloš Obilić, a Serbian knight involved in the Battle of Kosovo, and claimed to be the assassin of Turkish Sultan Murad I whose forces had defeated the Serbs. A visit to the local café confirmed I was in a parallel universe when a request for Peja Beer (the main Kosovan brew) was curtly rebuffed. I could have either Heineken or Serbian Beer, so Serbian it was. Suitably refreshed I crossed to the Monastery. Having

remembered to wear long trousers rather than shorts, I didn’t have to suffer the indignity of donning a floral wrap to hide my legs. A chat with a young Orthodox priest revealed a deep-seated nationalism on his part. The frescos were superb examples of the art, being created by craftsmen who had learned their trade in Constantinople, with depictions of the human form so realistic they looked more like products of the Renaissance. The Monastery and its decorations, completed in 1322, were created on the orders of King Milutin, testimony to the wealth he had accumulated from the exploitation of Kosovo’s mineral resources. As well as Biblical scenes, a pictorial tribute to King Milutin and his much younger wife adorned the walls.

Wandering back towards the spot where I thought I might be able to flag down a bus, I came across a post office. My children will testify that a post office and bus or railway station are my ‘must dos’ of any visit abroad! Cards in hand I soon discovered that this was actually a Serbian Post Office, with stamps to match. The cards arrived safely, too! There was also apparently a Kosovan Post Office, but I never located it. Outside, enjoying the sunshine and a fag, a couple of jolly lady employees chattered happily, although they did emphasise that they wanted peace above all. After several abortive attempts to flag down a bus, one did finally stop for me and I returned to Pristina Bus Station ready for the long slog back up hill to the centre of the City, past the unfinished Serbian Orthodox Cathedral.



I could only guess at the impact on the inhabitants’ daily lives, living in an enclave created out of communal mistrust.

Memories

I was born and brought up in the village of Toab in the Shetland Isles. This village of 25 houses was right under the flight path to Sumburgh Airfield and about 500 yards from the end of the longest runway. This runway was 800 yards long and the other two only 600 yards. Sumburgh was a Coastal Command airfield and was originally defended by 3 Gloster Gladiators sent up from Acklington. It was later defended by Spitfires and Hurricanes.

Early in the war squadrons of Hudson’s, Beaufords, Beaufighters and Blenheims were based at Sumburgh. These were with us for most of the war with frequent other visiting types.

My story involves the Lancaster bombers of 617 (Dambusters) and No 9 squadrons and the Tirpitz. During the war the RAF alone had carried out 33 missions, involving 700 aircraft, in attempts to rid Churchill of the “beast” as he called the Tirpitz!

In September 1944 this ship was moved from the fiords of northern Norway to Tromsø, putting it in range of the Lancaster aircraft flying from the Moray Firth aerodromes. The first operation called

Paravane was thought to be unsuccessful because of cloud but in fact rendered the Tirpitz so damaged that it never operated as a ship of war again!

The second operation called Obivate was launched on the 29th October 1944. For this operation the Lancasters were modified to carry the 12000-pound Tallboy bombs.

The bombers were equipped with the more powerful Merlin engines, extra petrol tanks, the removal of the dorsal and front gun turrets even the armour plating behind the pilot’s seat. The number of crew was reduced from 7 to 6. This operation was thought to be unsuccessful as there were no direct hits, however near misses caused further damage. This operation was followed up by Operation Cathecism planned for early November.

This was delayed on two occasions by bad weather. Two Mosquito fighters were then based at Sumburgh to monitor weather conditions at Tromsø. At 3am on the 12 November, 32 Lancasters left the Moray Firth Aerodromes in freezing conditions enroute to Tromsø.

Conditions at Tromsø were ideal and 3 hits and 2 near misses resulted in the capsizing of the Tirpitz.

On the return flight, head winds resulted in fuel problems for some aircraft. Sumburgh and Scatsta had been selected as alternative airfields that could not reach the Moray Firth airfields for any reason. Aeroplane watchers at Sumburgh noted unusual activity on the Sunday morning and guessed there would be some action on the runways, later in the day, but as morning moved into afternoon, without the arrival of any aircraft, a problem grew in the minds of the boys of the village. Sunday afternoon meant Sunday school and we would be trapped in the village hall when we needed to be at our observation points to view events (mine was the coastguard hut that had a panoramic view of the airfield). We were forced to attend Sunday School but were released when the first Lancaster was seen approaching from the north, allowing the children to watch the historic occasion.

The huge aircraft landed on the north/south runway coming so low over the Toab houses

that this aircraft left its trailing aerial wrapped around Tammy Slater's chimney pots. This aircraft was followed by a further 9 without problems. The 11th had been seen circling out at sea presumably trying to dislodge a 'held up' bomb closely following number 10. A flare was sent up calling it to 'go around' because other aircraft were still on the runway. It sent up 2 flares and against this order proceeded to land running out of fuel on the runway.

Later it transpired this aircraft still had its Tallboy aboard! Had it run out fuel thirty seconds earlier, over Toab, I would not be writing this!

The Lancaster that landed at Sumburgh with a Tallboy aboard was an aircraft of 617 squadron piloted by an Australian, F/O Arthur Kell. He had earlier been ordered to jettison his bomb but whether he decided to land with the bomb aboard or did he experience hydraulic problems and could not release it was not explained. Any way he deserved the bar to his DFC. He landed a heavy bomber to a difficult airfield and missing the houses of Toab was quite a feat.

John Harper.



German Battleship Tirpitz

Lockdown Projects

© Antony Chessell

How often have we said to ourselves ‘I’ve always been meaning to do that but I have never got around to it?’ In my case, lockdown has stimulated two small restoration projects that have been in the background for many, many years.

My father was in the RAF Intelligence Branch during WWII and, on demobilisation, he managed to bring back for me a Recognition model of a German Heinkel 115 floatplane, one of many models which used to hang from the ceilings in RAF stations to enable aircrews and anti-aircraft gunners to become familiar with the silhouettes and features of enemy aircraft. This model, like other Recognition models, is without markings, completely black and made from what I think is a very solid Bakelite. Unfortunately, it suffered during my childhood, ending up with broken and missing struts and crew ladders and even a missing float. I had always intended to restore it to the best of my ability but time passed without result. My father also brought back the occasional model car from when he was stationed in the Netherlands just after the war and also a small, silver clockwork tank that fired sparks from its gun as it went along.

The Heinkel 115 was a three-seat Luftwaffe seaplane used as a torpedo bomber and for general seaplane duties such as reconnaissance and minelaying as well as dropping agents behind enemy lines. The first prototype flew in 1937 and the aircraft came into service in 1939. Powered by two BMW engines, each of 950 hp, the plane had a maximum speed of 203 mph, a combat range of 1,300 miles and a service ceiling of 17,100 ft. It was armed with two MG machine guns, in dorsal and nose positions, five 550 lb bombs or two such bombs and one torpedo of 1,800 lbs and one 2,030 lb sea mine. The Heinkel 115 is considered by many to have been the best seaplane to have served in WWII on any side. It is interesting that Heligoland, described in Colin Wakeling’s article in Newsletter No. 3, May 2020, served as an emergency landing ground for German seaplanes during the war but it was never expanded into a permanent base.

Six aircraft were sold to the Royal Norwegian Navy Air Service in 1939 and, after the German invasion of Norway, four aircraft escaped to Britain where they formed the Norwegian Helensburgh Group. Three of the aircraft were subsequently used in covert operations off Norway and in the Mediterranean Sea in British service with Norwegian crews. Other Heinkel 115s were flown by the Finnish Air Force during the war, one being used to ferry *Sissi* troupes (Finnish Light Infantry) behind Soviet lines and two being operated with German markings by Finnish crews. The Swedish Air Force operated Heinkel 115s to protect and enforce Swedish neutrality during the war and these were not taken out of service until 1952.



My restoration involved making new wooden struts for the floats, the carving of a replica wooden float, making two ladders, fitting, gluing and painting in matt black. It has a rather sinister aspect as befits an enemy aircraft. On to my second project now, the restoration of damaged plaster noses on the faces of Punch, Judy, Policeman and Clown puppets, probably made in the 1930s and handed down to

me during the war when toys were scarce or in short supply. Who says that we haven’t got worthwhile things to do!

RESURRECTING AN OLD SONY DVD RECORDER

My current project is to resurrect an old Sony DVD recorder to enable me to record and play if I wish terrestrial TV programmes. I called Richer Sounds where I purchased the item about ten years ago after downloading the manual, which I had long since lost, off the internet. It gave me a huge range of instructions for use but did not tell me how to connect the satellite box to the TV via the DVD recorder. They told me I needed two scart leads which I purchased from Amazon along with recordable discs, which they hadn't stocked for many years. They also told me how to set it up.

I am now building a film and serial library to accompany the other discs we already had.

Amongst the little gems I have found are: -

1. **'Heartbeat'** episodes on ITV 3 and ITV 3 + 1, ignoring any depressing 'soaps.'
2. Films like: -
 - a. **'Farewell My Lovely'** with Dick Powell (1944). A Raymond Chandler Thriller.
 - b. **'The Lady from Shanghai'** with Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth. (1947). Thriller with the famous funfair mirrors gun battle climax.

c. **'On The Waterfront'** with Marlon Brando (1954). Film about employers and workforce at a docks with a dramatic climax.

d. **'Four Weddings and a Funeral'** with Hugh Grant and Andie Macdowell. (1994). A romantic comedy and good fun to watch.

e. **'The Net'** with Sandra Bullock and Jeremy Northam (1995). An IT thriller, where Sandra is made to believe she has lost her identity for disreputable political purposes.

f. **'Tiger Bay'** with John and Hayley Mills. (1959). A runaway criminal is befriended by Hayley who thinks he is Jesus.

Most of these films were found on Sony Movie Channels, Talking TV and Film Four which are all available on terrestrial TV.

My son has even printed a paper cover for each recording by googling an image and copying it into Word and then printing it. It isn't like the real thing, but it works for me.

I hope you have found this article an interesting read. The project has certainly helped me to keep my sanity during the lockdown period and it gives my wife a little peace from time to time!

Kevin Golding

Therapist: Your wife says you never buy her flowers is that true?

Him: To be honest, I never knew she sold flowers.



**It's been a bit of a strange day!
First I found a hat full of money.
Then I was chased by an angry man with a guitar...**

A Born Expert

I have been friends with Kathy Love for nearly fifty years, ever since she came over from California to study Law at Edinburgh University and she lodged with my Auntie Belle. Shortly after meeting her, her parents came over to visit and I was introduced to them. Her father, John Love, had his own business called "Laminair," which was a small specialised company, mostly doing work for the American Government and he had a very interesting life story.

He was born in North Hollywood, California on March 29th 1908. His father worked as a printer, after a youth spent searching for gold in the Klondike. John was eldest of three siblings, his brother Jim and sister Betty. When John was twelve, his parents took the family on a picnic. His mum had learned to drive a 1913 Chalmers. On arriving at the picnic site, she noticed that a front wooden wheel was loose and threatened to come apart. Everyone was asking "What can we do? It was miles to the nearest garage. John went to the toolbox, selected two or three different sized wrenches, returned to the wheel, determined which one would fit the nuts, then began tightening each nut followed by the one on the opposite side of the steel plate. The car was safe to drive, and the wheel never came loose again.

John always placed a great importance on education. Unfortunately, he had a bad stutter and was nearly thrown out of university because of poor attendance. However, he explained to the head that during roll call he had been too slow to answer and been marked down as absent and of course after the examination results, proved he had not been absent.

During the depression, he and his brother formed a four-piece band and was hired by the Dollar Steamship Line to entertain the passengers and sailed round the world twice

in 1932 and 1933. He drove a Model T Ford from San Francisco to New York and began work as a stage scenery designer on Broadway. It was here that he met a young, successful actress, Lenore Katherine Rice, who had been offered a screen test on Hollywood but had turned it down, Her brother was serving in the American Army and was based at Fort Dix, New Jersey, a short distance from New York and a meeting was arranged at Sardi's, known as the restaurant of the stars. John also knew that her brother's favourite whisky was Canadian Club and that it was illegal to post it. However, while overseas in a combat zone, he received a parcel from John, it rattled when shaken to eliminate suspicion. Once he removed the wrapping, John had made a metal container just large enough to hold a bottle of Canadian Club. Once the bottle had been put in, the vacant space at the neck was loosely filled with dried beans.

They were married in 1943 and shortly after moved to California to begin a life together. He founded his company and Lee became professor in residence, coordinated and associate director of the UCLA Psychology clinic.

Among John's professional achievements, he designed and built the fibreglass sphere that housed the cameras on the Ranger Moon shots in the early 60s and he made the skins for the spacecraft, so they didn't burn up on re-entering earth's atmosphere, and also the antenna for Concorde.

When I met him in 1972, he told me that although his brother-in-law and he were good friends, it was seven years before he was accepted as a family member, as Lee's parents had thought he had married her for her money. It had been hard starting his business, sometimes going without his

salary in order to pay his work force. He had good work relationships with his workers. When an order came in, he gathered them together and told them if it was completed on or before a certain date there would be bonuses for everyone.

During their visits to this country, they visited our house and we showed them Holy Island. On one occasion they spent Christmas and New Year and on the morning of New Year's Eve I phoned my cousin Harry Chalmers in Penicuik if it would be OK to bring them to Auntie Jess's house for Hogmanay. He immediately went to Aunt Jessie's house to tell her that everyone had to be on their best behaviour as they were having American guests. It was quite a convoy of cars, because not only did John and Lee go but Kathy, Auntie Belle, her boyfriend John Currie, Irene and my two sons Phil and Douglas. There must have been over twenty people in the room but John and Lee managed to find seats near Auntie Jess and everyone had a great time. Harry was fast asleep but managed to wake

up occasionally. It was the first time John and Lee had seen so many generations together and were amazed at how well they mixed. Next time I visited Auntie Jess, she thanked me for bringing the Loves, saying they were lovely people and that it had been one of the best Hogmanays she had ever had. John also brought over three pieces of Redwood bark and gave one to Uncle Donald, one to Auntie Belle and one to me. He told us to place them in water and once they had shoots to plant them. Auntie Belle and I planted ours outside and they died but Uncle Donald planted his in a large tub and placed it in his lounge and it grew. It is now in Inverewe Gardens.

At John's Memorial Service, his son Jock said, "My dad was a born expert at anything he wanted to do. He could solve any academic problem, he was an outstanding stage scenery designer, musician, mechanic, designer in the arts, house builder, boat builder, cartoonist, artist, photographer and more.

Ian Hannah



Be aware of scams

If NHS Test and Trace calls you by phone, the service will be using a single phone number- 0300 0135 000.

[This is the only website that the service will ask you to visit.](#)

NHS test and trace will never:

- Ask you to dial a premium rate number (for example, those starting 09 or 087)
- Ask you to make any form of payment
- Ask for any details about your bank account
- Ask for your social media identities or login details, or those of your contacts
- Ask you for any passwords or PINs, or ask you to set up any passwords or PINs over the phone
- Ask you to purchase a product
- Ask you to download any software to your device or ask you to hand over control of your PC, smartphone or tablet
- Ask you to access any website that does not belong to the Government or NHS

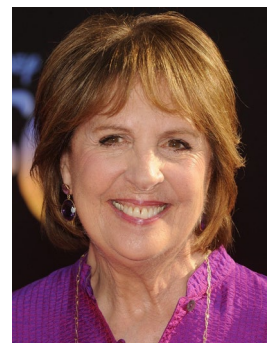
If you're suspicious about any emails or phone calls you receive about test and trace, you can report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.



Who Said?

"You need to keep on doing things you have never done before in your career. You have to have a go."

It was **Penelope Wilton** [Penelope Alice], Scarborough, North Yorkshire, English actress (Cry Freedom, Norman Conquests); Dame Penelope Alice Wilton DBE is an English actress. She is known for starring opposite Richard Briers in the BBC sitcom Ever Decreasing Circles; playing Homily in The Borrowers and The Return of the Borrowers; and for her role as the widowed Isobel Crawley in the ITV drama Downton Abbey. [Wikipedia](#)



who was born on this day, 3rd June 1946.

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.