



## The Probus Club of Berwick-upon-Tweed

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

Issue 14 – 3rd February 2021

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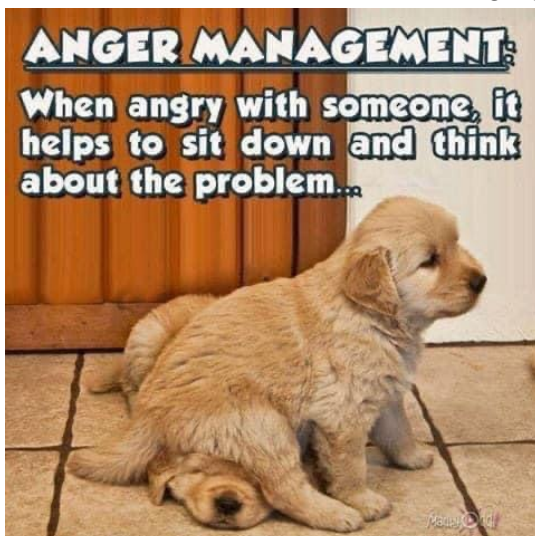
Dear Member,

This edition has a bit of a health and wellbeing flavour to it with an article by **Kevin Golding** on mindfulness and my personal story of chronic pain and how I recently found a way to get some relief. I tell it in the hope that it might help others.

**Antony Chessell** makes a discovery in the woods in his article 'A Winter Wonder.'

Your Committee needs validation which is why we are holding what might really be called a non-meeting, since we will not physically get together on 10<sup>th</sup> February; this is another example of how the human race has had to embrace technology to continue functioning in lockdown.

*Homer*



### Who Said?

**"The world worries about disability more than disabled people do."**

*Answer on last page of the newsletter*

*HL*

### Special General Meeting, 10<sup>th</sup> February

If you haven't discovered that there is an election of our Office-Bearers and Committee yet, then you haven't been reading your emails or checking your spam folder! Those who have no email should have received a physical copy of the Notice, Agenda and Voting Paper. If you still do not have any of this, I suggest you contact me straight away.

You might wonder why we are going through all of this now, in the middle of the pandemic and yet another lockdown. Well, you might be surprised at what has been going on in the background but more of that, perhaps, when we meet again.

Meet again I'm sure we will, once vaccination reaches a high proportion of the

population: I cannot wait!

Establishing a properly constituted Committee and confirming our 2021 Chairman is essential to the future running of the Club. Also, we have been without an elected Treasurer and Auditor for over a year now. This Special General Meeting allows you to cast your vote to secure an elected governing body.

At least two nominations have been received for each member appearing on the ballot paper.

The voting paper asks you firstly to cast a vote for the level of subscription for 2021. You can then vote for the existing Committee's recommendation for 2021 with an en bloc vote; if you vote NO for that proposition you will be offered a vote for each role in turn. Use this link if you haven't voted yet → [Probus Voting Paper](#)

The results will be published blind so the way anyone voted will not be made public. As Secretary, I will obviously know but the data will be privileged information and cannot be divulged (except to an auditor if the result is challenged).

#### **Vacancies:**

You may have noticed on the voting paper that there are two vacancies – Vice-Chairman and Programme Secretary. The first is, of course, an annual vacancy but the second; George Martin felt compelled to resign as Programme Secretary due to failing health, he will be difficult to replace.

Both of these are important posts and must be filled as soon as possible.

It is important that everyone votes and that votes are cast by **Wednesday 10th February**.

*Homer Lindsay*

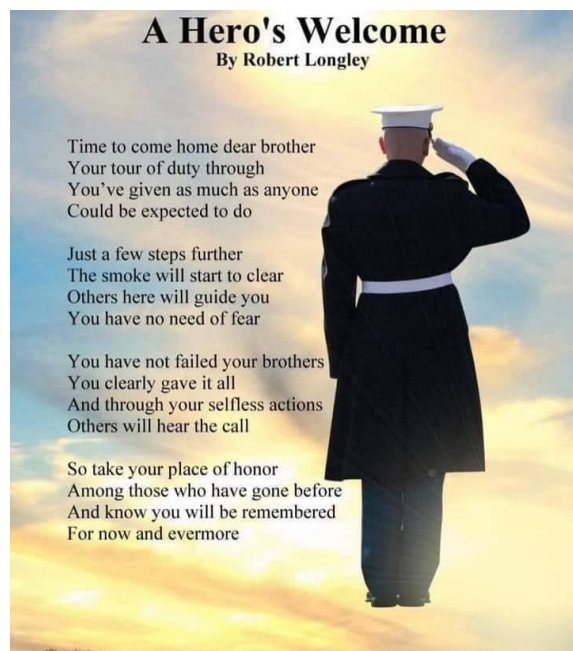
## “Tomorrow will be a Good Day”

### Captain Sir Tom Moore

30th April 1920 – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021



Captain Sir Thomas Moore, popularly known as Captain Tom, was a British Army officer, philanthropist and centenarian, known for his achievements raising money for charity in the run-up to his 100th birthday during the COVID-19 pandemic.



*Posted by Mhairi Derby-Pitt on Facebook*

For information about **The Captain Tom Foundation** click on this link →

<https://captaintom.org/>

### A Winter Wonder

Many of our winter exercise walks during the latest Covid lockdown have been conducted in a landscape of Stygian gloom. In such a semi-colourless atmosphere, it has been startling to experience an unexpected, brilliant scarlet flash in the corner of the eye. It brings us up short and, when we realise what it is, it immediately brightens up the day. It comes from one or more caps of the scarlet elf cup *Sarcoscypha austriaca*, a cup-shaped fungus attached to dead wood or leaf litter lying under trees in woodland or, in our case, alongside a wooded track. We have seen it in January and into February, but we have not heard what has been described as a tiny puffing sound as it releases its spores. It was first identified for us by Gwen's botanist friend from St. Andrews who often enquires after any follow-up sightings.



We are quite fortunate to see it because, although it is fairly widespread in the northern hemisphere, it is uncommon in Britain and, we think, even more so on the dryer, eastern side of the country. This is because the scarlet elf cup favours areas with high rainfall in damp areas of the woodland floor and so the ones we have seen are only about two centimetres across. But the effect is out of all proportion to the size. Its name originates in folk lore because it was said that wood elves drank morning dew from the cups. The fungus was also used by the Oneida Native Americans to stop bleeding and it was placed under bandages and on the navels of newly-born infants to promote healing. It is not poisonous but, although devotees of wild food might consider it a tasty treat, others have

described it as inedible. However, because of its comparative rarity in our area, it would be a shame to pick it, particularly if it has mythical significance. Having said that, we have not seen any wood elves but perhaps our walks have not been taken early enough in the day.

© Antony Chessell

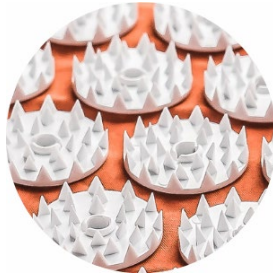
### Putting pressure on my back pain! A personal story

Have you heard of acupuncture? I'm sure we're all familiar with the image of Hindu or Muslim fakirs lying on beds of nails; an oblong piece of wood, the size of a bed, with nails pointing upwards out of it. It appears to the spectator that anyone lying on this "bed" would be injured by the nails, but this is not so. Assuming the nails are numerous enough, the weight is distributed among them so that the pressure exerted by each nail is not enough to puncture the person's skin.

Some of you may know that I have suffered with spinal problems and chronic back pain since I was 16 years of age, culminating in spinal surgery to fuse three vertebrae together in 1989 - 1992.

Of the hundreds of 'aids' to reduce pain and improve mobility that I have tried at huge expense over the years there is one that I recently came across that has helped enormously.

An **acupressure mat**, the nails. It has approximately which has 27 sharp points points.



modern-day equivalent to the bed of twenty rows of eleven discs, each of (or needles); almost 6000 acupressure

Before I got the mat, I had been experiencing neck, side and shoulder pain for which I was receiving regular private acupuncture and myofascial therapy. These treatments were suspended during the lockdown and my wife, Margaret, found the Shakti Mat online.

It took me a few weeks of looking at it before I plucked up the courage to actually lie on it.



I lay it on my bed and lie on the mat for between twenty and thirty minutes most days. It is uncomfortable for the first ten to twenty seconds but then the body starts to move blood to the area. The skin gets warm over the next minute or so, then I feel a tingly, deep heat effect. My back soon begins to relax and tension eases. At the end of the twenty – thirty-minute session I feel completely relaxed; I feel like I have had

a deep massage.

I have to say that the neck, side and shoulder pains I had been experiencing have gone for much of the time. Not a cure necessarily, but huge sustained relief.

I am often told that the cause of a particular pain point is muscle and tendon tension somewhere else, which is why the therapist giving massage often treats muscle groups elsewhere before treating the area of concern. This mat covers the whole of the back and neck; its pressure points release tension across back and shoulders to provide a similar effect.

I am certainly grateful to my wife for finding this very effective aid to relief and relaxation.

This is not an advertisement for any product but if you want to know more click on this link → <https://www.shaktimat.co.uk/>

### THOUGHTS ON THE PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS

We live in an extremely fast-paced world and sometimes we forget to check in with ourselves. Mindfulness gives us a sense of inner peace. There are a variety of tools to develop this.

According to the American Psychological Association mindfulness is: -

“... a moment-to-moment awareness of one’s experience without judgment. In this sense, mindfulness is a state not a trait. While it might be promoted by certain practices, such as meditation, it is not equivalent to or synonymous with them.”

Mindfulness is a state that can be brought on through practice and

is not static and involves awareness and impartiality about what we gain from this awareness.

In the age of social media non-judgemental reflection is a welcome change.

Another definition from Jon Kabat-Zinn, a global expert on mindfulness who says: -

“The awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.”

This is the more widely accepted definition and more descriptive for those who want to start practicing. Zinn tells us to focus conscious attention on the “right here, right now.”

Zinn had much to do with re-imagining Buddhist contemplation practices for a secular age almost 40 years ago. In 1979, he established the University of Massachusetts Medical Clinic’s Stress Reduction School, where Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) really came to the fore. He published a book called ‘Full Living Catastrophe<sup>3</sup>’ which made mindfulness practice and meditation much more accessible to mainstream circles.

Zinn has outlined three purposes of mindful meditation in its Buddhist context -

- Knowing the mind – Training the mind – Freeing the mind

The various literature reveals that mindfulness greatly helps in the following areas: -

1. Improved working memory.
2. Heightened metacognitive awareness.
3. Lower levels of anxiety.
4. Reduced emotional ‘reactivity’
5. Enhanced visual attention processing.
6. Reduced stress.
7. Managing physical pain.

Given that anxiety and depression are two of the most prevalent mental illnesses in the world, it’s unsurprising that two of the most well-known mindfulness-based interventions are focused on addressing these mental states. Zinn again pioneered a group approach centring on a flexible range of mindfulness practices dealing with stress and anxiety related mental illness.

I have participated in the first two levels of mindfulness courses. The first started in March 2018 where I attended a seven-week beginners N.B.L.C. course at Bab’yama Clinic<sup>2</sup> in Castlegate, Berwick, run by Isabelle Roney<sup>2</sup>. She was a wonderful teacher with a great sense of humour. There was a group of around ten people, mainly female, which I wasn’t complaining about. Briefly, we covered the following areas: -



**Week 1 – This involved introducing us to the practice of mindfulness in the following areas-**

- settling our intention and motivation
- recognising the unsettled mind
- posture
- settling the mind

Each week we were asked to log on a daily basis pleasant events, unpleasant events and to keep a daily journal of practicing the audio tapes downloaded onto smartphone, computer or tablet via Dropbox<sup>1</sup>. Also, we were asked to read course notes for each week. The general aim was to relax both body and mind to deal with stress in particular.

**Week 2 – The body as a place to stay present**

- obstacles
- body scan meditation
- mindfulness in daily life
- memories of kindness

**Week 3 – Introducing mindfulness support**

- attachment and aversion
- disconnection
- settling, grounding, resting with sound support
- three minute breathing space

**Week 4 – Working with distraction**

- mindful movement
- distraction into the three times
- settling, grounding, resting with breath support

**Week 5 – Exploring the undercurrent**

- loving kindness for others
- noticing the observer and undercurrent

**Week 6 – Attitude**

- cultivating self-acceptance in noticing our attitude towards the undercurrent
- loving kindness to self and others

**Week 7 – Self-Acceptance**

- self-compassion
- self-compassion break
- acceptance

The second level, sixteen-week course started in June 2020 and focused on compassion for others; their compassion for you and compassion for yourself. I can go into greater detail in a future issue if readers wish. The course was run on zoom by Brian Turnbull of Kelso.

I have gained tremendous value from mindfulness, particularly during Covid-19 times in dealing with all the stress and anxiety it brings. Anyone who downloads Dropbox<sup>1</sup> on their computer, tablet or smart phone and gives me their e-mail address will receive some starter exercises from me.

*© Kevin Golding*

**References:**

<sup>1</sup> DropBox: <https://www.dropbox.com/> You can register for a FREE Basic account, then download the Dropbox App to your tablet or iPhone; however, Kevin could also share his exercise files by creating a share link and sending it to you by email.

<sup>2</sup> Bab'yama, Isabelle Roney <https://www.babyama.co.uk/about>

<sup>3</sup> [Full Living Catastrophe](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D [Amazon]

**Editor's Note:**

You may be also be interested in some simple Breathing Exercises to Help Calm You Down, by Alice Oglethorpe:

Breathing is a bit of a no-brainer, literally. You inhale and exhale all day long without giving it a second thought. But here's the weird thing about your breath: Unlike other automatic functions, like your heart beating, you can also choose to control it and breathe faster or slower than normal. And by doing so, [you can have a pretty big impact on your mental health](#).

"Your breath connects what you're thinking and how your body feels," says [Belisa Vranich](#), a clinical psychologist and author of *Breathe: The Simple, Revolutionary 14-Day Program to Improve Your Mental and Physical Health*. "And it goes in both directions." In other words, not only does your breath speed up when you get stressed but breathing quickly can actually bring on feelings of stress. It works the other way too: Slow your breathing down and make your breaths deeper and you will start to quickly feel more relaxed.

"When people purposefully try to calm down, they credit things like the candle they lit or the mantra they repeated, and those things help," says Vranich. "But the real impact is because they made you slow your breathing, which is what really relaxed you."

[Breathe This Way](#)

If you haven't thought about your breath in a while, chances are it's relatively shallow, which isn't great. "I call it hover breathing, because you're taking tiny sips of air in and letting tiny sips of air out," says Vranich. "It's one reason why yawning feels so good—you're finally taking in lots of oxygen!" The other mistake: You're expanding your chest when you breathe as opposed to your belly and sides. Change your breathing to be deep and expansive low in your torso and you're already well on your way to feeling more relaxed. If you're ready for something a little more specific, try these three breathing exercises Vranich recommends to help you feel more peaceful in no time.

**Walking Breath:** The next time you're walking down the street, try timing your inhales and exhales to your steps. Inhale for two steps and exhale for two steps. After a few rounds of that, switch to inhaling for two and exhaling for three. "Exhaling for longer than you inhale stimulates your vagus nerve, which activates your parasympathetic nervous system," says Vranich. "That is what calms you down."

**4-4-6-2:** This pattern gets gradually slower as you go, which makes it pretty powerful at relaxing you. Inhale for four seconds, hold for four seconds, exhale for six seconds, hold for two. Keep repeating this pattern but as you go on, start counting slower and slower.

**Mouth-to-Nose:** Start with three mouth-only breaths (mimic yawning). Then do three breaths where you inhale through your mouth and exhale through your nose. Last, do three breaths inhaling and exhaling through your nose only. "You'll get a lot of oxygen when you do the

yawns,” says Vranich, “and when you switch to your nose, you start getting nitric oxide, which is inherently relaxing.”



*This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or condition. Always check with your doctor before changing your diet, altering your sleep habits, taking supplements, or starting a new fitness routine.*

Alice Oglethorpe is a freelance writer and editor based in Chicago, IL. She covers health, happiness, fitness, and anything else that piques her interest. Her work has appeared in O, The Oprah Magazine, Self, Shape, Fitness, Redbook, Health, Better Homes & Gardens, Psychology Today, Good Housekeeping, and more.

## Who Said?

**"The world worries about disability more than disabled people do."**



**Warwick Ashley Davis** (born 3 February 1970)<sup>[3]</sup> is an English actor, television presenter, writer, director, comedian, and producer.<sup>[4]</sup> He played the title characters in *Willow* (1988) and the *Leprechaun film series* (1993–2003); several characters in the *Star Wars film series* (1983–2019), most notably the *Ewok Wicket*; and *Professor Filius Flitwick* and *Griphook* in the *Harry Potter film series* (2001–2011). Davis starred as a fictionalised version of himself in the sitcom *Life's Too Short* (2012–2013). He has also presented the *ITV* game shows *Celebrity Squares* (2014–2015) and *Tenable* (2016–present).

By Official Star Wars Blog - 2007 Disney Weekends #4:  
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<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3243904>

**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.**