

NEWSLETTER



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



DECEMBER 2025

Message from our Chairman

Only 25 days to go and Christmas will be here. As I get, older the way we celebrate Christmas has inevitably changed. My favourite memories are of the excited look on the faces of our children which I still remember from so many years ago, replaced more recently with the same pleasure from being with our grandchildren. We may celebrate Christmas in different ways but it remains a Christian festival and I hope increasing commercialisation does not destroy that. Nevertheless, at its heart it is also an opportunity for family and friends to reunite.

Next week we have our Christmas lunch at Hatherley Manor. As I write we are still short of a few payments so if that remains the case, I will be taking up my role as debt collector and chasing up the stragglers!

All is prepared and the attendance is looking good. I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the event in one way or another with special thanks to Kelvin, our organiser in chief. We have been fortunate to have several new members coming for the first time so I very much hope that you and your partners enjoy the event.

I look forward to the new year for which we have a full programme of speakers, so my thanks again to Fraser for all his work arranging this.

Finally, may I wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year

Mike

CHRISTMAS LUNCH



TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER
12.30 FOR 13.00

HATHERLEY MANOR HOTEL
DOWN HATHERLEY LANE
GLOUCESTER
GL2 9QA

WHAT THREEWORDS
regard.artist.merely





LESSER KNOWN BRITISH INVENTIONS

THE TOOTH BRUSH - WILLIAM ADDIS - 1770

SODA WATER - JOSEPH PRIESTLEY - 1772

TENSION - SPOKED WHEEL - GEORGE CAYLEY - 1808

TIN CAN - PETER DURAND - 1810

MODERN FIRE EXTINGUISHER - GEORGE MANBY - 1818

CEMENT – JOSEPH ASPDIN - 1824

CHOCOLATE BAR - J S FRY - 1824

LAWNMOWER - EDWARD BEARD BUNNING - 1827

LINOLEUM - FREDERICK WALTON - 1860

SEWAGE SYSTEM - JOSEPH BAZALGETTE - 1865

THERMOS FLASK - SIR JAMES DEWAR - 1892

ELECTRIC VACUUM CLEANER - HUBERT CECIL BOOTH - 1901

DISC BRAKES - FREDERICK WILLIAM LANCHESTER - 1902

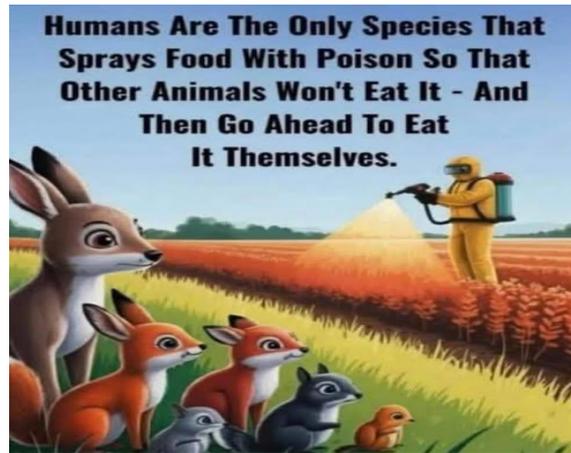
AUTOMATIC KETTLE - PETER HOBBS - 1955

HIP REPLACEMENT - JOHN CHARNLEY - 1962

CARBON FIBRE - ROYAL AIRCRAFT ESTABLISHMENT ENGINEERS - 1963

ATM - JOHN SHEPHERD-BARRON - 1967

WIND UP RADIO - TREVOR BAYLIS - 1991



Some days I wake up motivated. Other days I just stare at the wall and call it "meditation"

When I was eighteen I used to touch my toes twenty times each morning, these days I have a cup of coffee and wave at them

BAH HUMBUG!

During the Covid lockdown, if you had the family around on Christmas Day, the Police could force entry to your home and make them go home!

Does anyone know if this service is still available and if you have to book?

I'VE FINALLY REACHED THE WONDER YEARS. I WONDER WHERE I LEFT MY PHONE. I WONDER WHERE MY GLASSES ARE I WONDER WHERE MY CAR IS PARKED. I WONDER WHAT DAY IT IS!



LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL



Picture the scene. The regular meeting has just ended and you are feeling fairly satisfied, even smug maybe? You've renewed acquaintance with some of your newly made friends, maybe putting the world to rights in the process, had a nice warm drink and perhaps even a hitherto forbidden chocolate biscuit. The speaker has given a highly articulate talk on a subject you had never heard of a couple of hours ago and now you wondered how all those years you had managed to be in ignorance of it. Already, you've sneaked a look at your diary to see the date and subject of the next meeting, with a vague feeling of regret that it's over for a couple of weeks.

We have news for you. It needn't be! And here it must be said that this message is primarily aimed at our newer members, those who have joined within, say, the previous six months or so. At close of play, after each meeting a group of us repair to the King's Arms, where we enjoy a convivial glass or two and continue where we left off at Gorsley. There is no formality to joining us there and it's not even the same bunch every time and you are most welcome to join us. The KA, as it's colloquially known, has a welcoming atmosphere under the aegis of licensee Wayne and Chrissie.

You can stay as long (or as short) after the next meeting?

Do at least give it a try. You will discover that it is a nice way to round off what we hope had been a pleasant morning.

So, may we look forward to seeing you there after the next meeting?

Be warned, it could become a habit.

60 years ago, kids learned

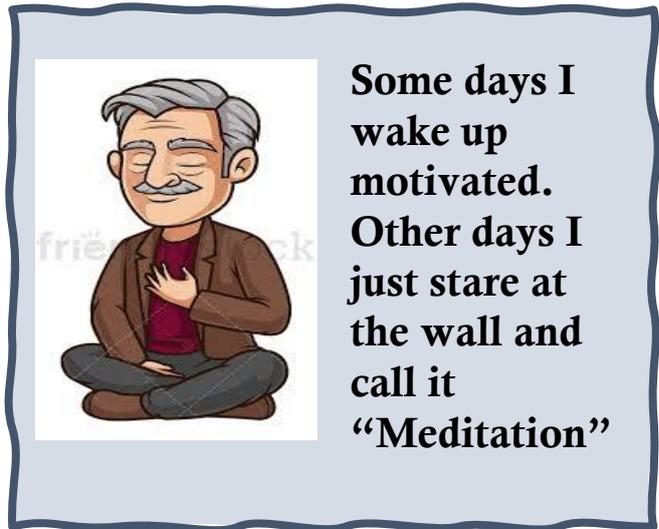
A is for **APPLE**
B is for **BALL**
C is for **CAT**
D is for **DOG**

Today...

A is for **ANDROID**
B is for **BLUETOOTH**
C is for **CHAT**
D is for **DOWNLOAD**

And to Senior citizens

A is for **ARTHRITIS**
B is for **BLOOD PRESSURE**
C is for **CHOLESTEROL**
D is for **DIABETES**



Some days I
wake up
motivated.
Other days I
just stare at
the wall and
call it
“Meditation”



Written by a
black man with
a great sense
of humour.

When U Black, U Black.

When I was born I was **BLACK**
When I grew up I was **BLACK**
When I went out in the sun I stayed **BLACK**
When I got cold I was **BLACK**
When I was scared I was **BLACK**
When I was sick I was **BLACK**
And when I die, I'll still be **BLACK**

NOW, you “WHITE” folks

When you were born you were **PINK**
When you grow up you are **WHITE**
When you go out in the sun you go **RED**
When you are cold you go **BLUE**
When you are scared you're **YELLOW**
When you are sick you are **GREEN**
When you bruise you turn **PURPLE**
And when you die you go **GREY**

So why are you folks calling us **COLOURED?**



Spare a thought for poor old Michael O'Leary, Chief Executive of Ryanair.

After arriving in a hotel in Manchester, he went to the bar and asked for a pint of Guinness.

The barman nodded and said, "That will be £3 please, Mr. O'Leary."

Somewhat taken aback, O'Leary replied, "That's very cheap," and handed over his money.

"Well, we do try to stay ahead of the competition", said the barman. "And we are serving free pints every Wednesday from 6 pm until 8 pm. We have the cheapest beer in England".

"That is remarkable value", Michael comments.

The Barman says "I see you don't seem to have a glass, so you'll probably need one of ours. That will be £4 please." O'Leary scowled, but paid up.

He took his drink and walked towards a seat. "Ah, you want to sit down?" said the barman. "That'll be an extra £4. You could have pre-booked the seat and it would have only cost you £2."

"I think you may be too big for the seat sir, can I ask you to sit in this frame please".

Michael attempts to sit down but the frame is too small and when he can't squeeze in, he complains "Nobody would fit in that little frame".

"I'm afraid if you can't fit in the frame you'll have to pay an extra surcharge of £4 for your seat sir". O'Leary swore to himself, but paid up. "I see that you have brought your laptop with you" added the barman. "And since that wasn't pre-booked either, that will be another £4."

O'Leary was so incensed that he walked back to the bar, slammed his drink on the counter, and yelled, "This is ridiculous, I want to speak to the manager".

"I see you want to use the counter," says the barman, "That will be £2 please."

O'Leary's face was red with rage. "Do you know who I am?" "Of course I do Mr. O'Leary."

"I've had enough! What sort of a Hotel is this? I come in for a quiet drink and you treat me like this. I insist on speaking to a manager!"

The Barman said "Here is his e-mail address, or if you wish, you can contact him between 9.00 am and 9.01am every morning, Monday to Tuesday at this free phone number. Calls are free, until they are answered, then there is a talking charge of only £1 per second, or part thereof".

O'Leary storms off shouting "I will never use this Hotel again".

"OK sir, but do remember, we are the only hotel in England selling pints for £3."

I suppose it was only a matter of time before he got his comeuppance? ED



Antarctica – An experience of life on the Ice

Graham Mawdsley

Our speaker, and member of Newent Probus, Graham Mawdsley applied to become a meteorologist with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) while a student at university. His application was successful and after a period of training he was given a 2 year assignment commencing in November 1975.

The British Antarctic Survey has several research bases on or near the Antarctic Peninsular and Graham was assigned to “Station Z”, also known as Halley Bay. His journey from the UK was by ship. This very remote location is situated on the Brunt Ice Shelf, which is 200 – 250 metres thick. Due to its unique location and weather conditions it is very important for studies in meteorology, glaciology, seismology, radio astronomy, ionospheric physics and geomagnetism.

Graham was fortunate that the ice pack was slow to melt so he had to stay on board ship while it travelled to various stations resupplying them. He managed to visit the site of Shackleton’s grave on the island of South Georgia. It wasn’t just a sightseeing cruise however, and a lot of manual effort was required to unload stores and ferry them ashore.

Eventually the ship was able to get to Station Z, which is built underground with shafts running from the surface to the accommodation in tunnels in the ice. A fascinating insight of life at Station Z was provided by pictures Graham had taken during his time there. There were 18 personnel (all male) at the base, along with 2 huskies. Temperatures didn’t get above -0.5C and Graham endured a lowest temperature of -52.5C. The temperature in the unheated areas of the accommodation could be as low as -18C. Toilet arrangements were “unusual” – it’s best to ask Graham to elaborate rather than document them here! There was no daylight for about 100 days during winter.

The meteorologists took 3 hourly weather observations, often using hydrogen balloons.

Launching a balloon could be extremely challenging in poor weather, radar equipment was old and temperamental. Sometimes manual measurements had to be taken outside for hours at a time in very low temperatures.

Due to the manual nature of the work, in extreme weather conditions, a high calorie intake was required so the staff were well fed. Supplies were stored in an underground ice cave and were mainly of dried or tinned food. The base was re-supplied once a year. There was no guarantee the ship could moor adjacent to the base and it could end up 40-50 miles away. The logistics of transferring the much needed stores over such a distance across the ice shelf was both complex and at times hazardous.

As well as the wonderful pictures, Graham had an interesting collection of artefacts including canvas boots from his original kit, the tip of a whale harpoon, a whale vertebra, Penguin egg etc. Graham’s talk was fascinating and after questions and a vote of thanks the members present expressed their appreciation with a very well deserved round of applause.

More detail of the British Antarctic Survey can be found at www.bas.ac.uk

Details of Halley Bay (Station Z) can be found at www.bas.ac.uk/about/about-bas/history/british-research-stations-and-refuges/halley-z/



You will have read elsewhere in the issue I hope, of our invitation to join us on our post meeting get-together at the King's Arms. This, however is not our only sojourn to sample the offerings of Newent and district's hostelries. We have a monthly pub lunch to which our partners are invited. This is the tale of one such outing; the opinions on the food etc. are purely subjective and remain the ideas of the author. ED

Our chief gourmet writes; -

When it was announced that the Trumpet, near Ledbury, was to be our pub visit of choice for November my immediate thought on its origins was that it was an example of a 16th century bawdy house or "knocking shop" and the name was a corruption of the term *strumpet*. Alas, no such luck. It started life as a humble village inn and was lately adapted to the passing coach trade, being strategically placed on the crossroads.

Now, under new management, having recently re-opened and those travellers of yore would not recognise those dishes on offer. But first of all, the decor; I suspect it has recently experienced a paintbrush, held by a trades person who has an eye to both design and colour, complemented by a roaring log fire aided by a draught so fierce that were it to be reversed it could promise to suck an unwary drinker back up its vast chimney.

With numbers slightly down, partly due to a change of day and the inevitable seasonal coughs and sneezes, we were not disappointed at the food on offer. My first thought was "Forget the tired old offerings in other establishments such as scampi which was surely a long time since it had tasted the sea. This was to be a restaurant style offering but, not it must be said, with restaurant type prices. I had a belly of pork and the only thing that was louder than the crackling was in the fire as the logs cracked hissed and spit. My wife, whose unspoken aim is to reduce the fish stocks around the British Isles, chose a sea bass which tasted so fresh that we would not have been surprised to discover that it still had a fish hook in its mouth. Tradition loomed large in the dessert menu. All the old favorites were there, B&B pudding, Banoffee pie et al 'but when the bill of fare included a cheesecake then it is no contest.

Tea and coffee to round off what had been an excellent, keenly priced meal and it only remained to give thanks to our organiser Andrew for his choice of destination. There won't be a Pub Lunch in December as that is our grand Christmas lunch, but why not come along to our January lunch. You will be very welcome

Peter (aka Ronay) Hayes



THE ARCANE, BIZARRE AND DARN RIGHT WITCHY

That there was no need to wear what looks like an inverted traffic cone (*shouldn't that be Crone. ED*) on your head, be as ugly as sin with a toothless smile, be dressed in black and spend your days in-canting something that sounds like "... double trouble etc." to be a witch was made lucidly clear by Kirstie Bingham, the Heritage manager of the Tewkesbury based John Moore Museum when she gave our final talk of 2025 on witches and witchcraft and which left members spellbound.

Since Biblical times the community has sought a scapegoat for the various ills that befall mankind and, in the 16th, /18th Centuries it probably reached its apogee with around 250 women executed, and to show that there was gender inequality in those days just 23 men by various unpleasant forms, having been found guilty to the charge of being a witch. Not that it needs much evidence for someone to be arrested on suspicion of being one; a misinterpreted glance, an over large nose 'even the close proximity of the family cat – all these and more were sufficient to land the unfortunate woman (and yes, it was usually a female) in the hastily built dock'

There was no need to rely on such flimsy concepts as hard evidence or proof; one novel method was known as "dunking". This involved binding the suspect and then tossing her into a pool. If she floated, then she was a witch and dealt with accordingly. Should she sink, then she was declared innocent. The fact that by this time, the unfortunate was dead was somehow overlooked.

In the purges of the 17th century, help was needed in finding and identifying suspected witches. Principal among these was a Matthew Hopkins, known as the 'Witchfinder General', who was a prominent figure in the witch-hunting era of the English Civil War. He was active from 1644 until his retirement in 1647 and is believed to have been responsible for the deaths of 300 women accused of witchcraft between 1644 and 1646. Hopkins, who was the son of a Puritan minister, began his career as a witch-finder after overhearing women discussing their meetings with the Devil. He claimed to be the Witchfinder General, commissioned by Parliament, and used methods such as sleep deprivation and torture to extract confessions from his victims.

During this period, there were several prominent trials, including the North Berwick (Scotland) trials. They ran for two years, and implicated over 70 people. The "witches" allegedly held their covens on the Auld Kirk Green. Confessions were extracted by torture. These trials were among the better known of the large number of witch trials between the early sixteenth century and the mid-eighteenth century.

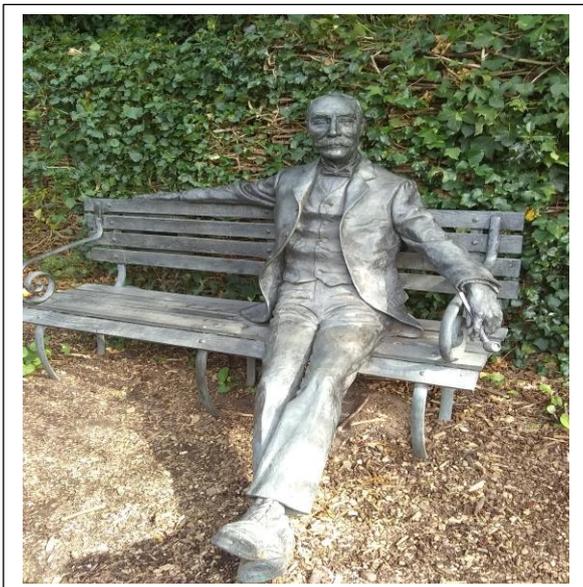
"Witch-phobia" was by no means solely a British preoccupation. It was, and still is in certain developing countries with probably the most infamous being the Salem (Massachusetts) witch trial of the late 17th century when fourteen women and five men were hanged as witches,

No recompense for this barbaric behavior towards both real and imaginary witches has ever been made but former Scottish First minister Nicola Sturgeon did formally apologise when she said she was choosing to acknowledge an "egregious historic injustice". It is thought 4,000 Scots, most of them women, were accused of breaking the Witchcraft Act between 1563 and 1736.

The Witches of Scotland campaign had urged the government to offer a public apology, saying it would send a "powerful signal".

A spirited round of questions followed Kirstie's talk and she was warmly applauded. Our meeting ended with members remembering to avoid walking under ladders and stroking black cats,

Peter (Warlock) Hayes



Where am I ?



WE DIDN'T FORGET

**'When You Go Home, Tell Them Of Us And Say,
For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today.'**

As is now traditional, your club gave a generous donation to the annual Poppy Appeal by the Royal British Legion. Your wreath now lies with the others from the other many organisations and clubs that this small town supports and which makes up its beating heart. Reminding us, if we need reminding, that Newent consistently “punches above its weight”.

November seems a fitting month to pay tribute, with its gloom. Somehow, marking the anniversary in a heatwave would seem wrong, considering the conditions that those who fought and died in past conflicts, endured.

As in those immortal words and I paraphrase “.... *they gave up their today so that we might have a tomorrow*”, echoed around the churchyard. A cub scout, proud in his gleaming uniform and who looked barely old enough to be at school, laid his wreath. Surely, the thought was in many of our minds that today is his tomorrow, thanks to those who gave their lives. May he never have to endure what his great grandfather’s generation did.

**Thanks to all those who submitted
articles and assisted with production.**

Ed

Can I remind readers that the Newsletter is for the enjoyment and information of Newent Probus Club members & partners and should not be reproduced or passed to third parties without permission of editor



LOOKING FORWARD



PUB LUNCH
TUESDAY 6 JANUARY
THE RED LION
PETERSTOW
NR ROSS-ON-WYE

TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2026

SPEAKER: RICHARD JEYNES

"THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION PAST & PRESENT"



MONDAY 19 JANUARY

**QUIZ
NIGHT**

KINGS ARMS 7pm

TUESDAY 27 JANUARY

SPEAKER: FRASER GUNN

"THE GREAT FIRE OF WINDSOR"

