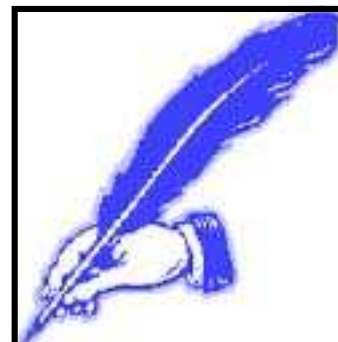


# La Plume de Probus Pontivy

**The official Newsletter**

**Of the Probus Club de  
Pontivy**

**March 2011**



## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Iacta alea est ! The die is cast !*

After much soul-searching and discussion, the Committee finally took the decision to relocate our monthly meeting and lunch. Henceforth we shall foregather at the hôtel and restaurant ROBIC, which is situated at the opposite end of Pontivy from l'AIGLON at the rond-point of the Rue Jean Jaurès.

Our decision to move was the culmination of a growing sense of frustration and disappointment at the standard of cuisine in relation to the prices asked, and the indifference not infrequently shown to us by the management. Other tangible disadvantages of the venue were the staircase which many found difficult, if not impossible, and the inconvenience of having to wait for the end of the presentations before the tables could be laid. Piped music was also an annoyance from time to time. Hence the move.

It was realised that there would be financial consequences since we would inevitably have to pay for a separate meeting room, and efforts were unstintingly made to procure the best deal we could find in the area.

This, coupled with the awareness that our stock of "in-house" speakers was nearing its end, inevitably meant that the subscription would have to be increased, not only to cover the cost of the room, but also to defray any fees and/or expenses which our guest speakers might request.

Thus it is that we have been obliged to fix the subscription for the calendar year 2011 at 20 euros per semester, making a total for the year of 40 euros, of which the first instalment of 20 euros has now fallen due. The second tranche will become payable on July 1<sup>st</sup> next. The situation will be kept under constant review by the Committee.

Striking a more cheerful note, I have to tell you about an interesting new development. A link has been forged between our club and our Jersey counterparts by Nick Dent and John Harris, and, following a meeting between John and the Jersey people, an agreement was reached to hold a joint meeting in Saint Malo next May. By chance, I happened to be seated at the recent AGM of the Bureau National de Liaison in Lille next to the President of Probus Armor, which is based in Dinard and through him I have made contact with the President of Probus Emeraude club whose HQ is in Saint Malo. The idea was floated of a link-up between our three Breton clubs and our English-speaking neighbours in Jersey and Guernsey. A collaboration from time to time between these five clubs would create a "West France Caucus", and a first step, dipping our toes in the water so to speak, we would all be represented at the May meeting in Saint Malo. We are now actively looking for a suitable venue with the help of our new-found French friends, and so I would like those of our members who are interested to make themselves known. A good turn-out by our club would set the ball rolling, so please let me know if you are able and willing to come. Covoiturage, as the French say, is doubtless possible although we have not yet worked out how to do it.

As a final point (I hesitate to say admonition), our Newsletter, which has already elicited the admiration of our friends at the BNL, stands or falls on the contributions of you, our members, whether they be of general, local or personal interest; so keep them coming!!

Tony Dyson

## **UN MOT DU PRESIDENT**

**Iacta alea est ! Les dés sont jetés !**

A l'issue de maintes discussions et d'examen de conscience, votre comité de gestion a enfin pris la décision de « changer de crémèrie » et quitter l'Aiglon comme lieu de réunion et de restauration. Dorénavant nous nous réunirons à l'hôtel restaurant ROBIC qui se trouve à l'autre bout de Pontivy au rond-point en bas de la rue Jean Jaurès.

Cette décision reflète le sens sans cesse croissant d'une déception frustrante découlant du rapport qualité/prix parfois fantaisiste, et de l'indifférence que nous a fréquemment témoignée la direction de l'Aiglon. Nous avons même à un moment donné songé à quitter les confins de la ville pour aller ailleurs dans le département, mais le BNL nous l'a déconseillé pour raison de complications administratives. Nos griefs comprenaient également certains désavantages inéluctables tels que l'escalier qui était par trop difficile pour certains sans parler du problème de devoir attendre la fin d'une conférence avant que les tables ne puissent être mises pour le repas. D'où notre décision de déménager.

Nonobstant notre désir d'améliorer le cadre et la tenue de nos réunions, nous étions pleinement conscients des conséquences financières auxquelles nous devrions inévitablement faire face. Une salle de réunion séparée se paie ! Nous cherchions donc la solution la plus rentable, sachant par la même occasion que notre réserve de conférenciers disponibles au sein de notre club diminuait sensiblement et qu'il faudrait en prévoir des gens de l'extérieur avec tous les frais y afférents.

Voilà la raison pour laquelle nous sommes obligés de revoir la cotisation dont chaque membre sera redevable cette année-ci. Cette cotisation sera portée à 20 € par semestre ou 40 € pour l'année.

La première tranche de 20 € est déjà tombée à échéance, la deuxième devenant payable le 1<sup>er</sup> juillet prochain. L'évolution de nos fortunes sera attentivement tenue à l'œil !

Qu'on oublie ces considérations déprimantes ! Parlons plutôt d'un nouveau développement que je trouve assez palpitant ! Il s'agit d'un lien qui vient d'être créé par Nick Dent et John Harris entre notre club et celui de Jersey, suite auquel John, ayant eu l'occasion d'en discuter avec nos amis de Jersey, a pu organiser une réunion entre nos deux clubs au mois de mai à Saint Malo. Or, il se fait que par un pur hasard, je me suis trouvé assis à côté d'un probusien breton lors de l'Assemblée Générale du BNL qui s'est tenue à Marcq en Baroeul au mois de décembre dernier. Ce délégué était ni plus ni moins le Président de Probus ARMOR, dont le siège se trouve à Dinard, et par son biais j'ai pu entrer en contact avec le Président de Probus Emeraude de Saint Malo. Avec le concours de nos amis de Jersey, nous avons eu l'idée géniale de créer un ensemble de clubs PROBUS OUEST FRANCE, comprenant les trois clubs bretons francophones (sauf Pontivy qui ne l'est qu'à moitié), et les clubs anglophones de Jersey et Guernesey. La première réunion de ce « maxi-club » se tiendra donc le 11 mai prochain à Saint Malo ou à Dinard. Le lieu de réunion reste encore à définir.

Bryan Price would like you to consider the following rather interesting coincidences

Year 1981

- 1.Prince Charles got married
- 2.Liverpool crowned champions of Europe
- 3.Australia lost the Ashes
- 4.The Pope died

Year 2005

1. Prince Charles got married, again
- 2.Liverpool crowned Champions of Europe, again
- 3.Australia lost the Ashes again
4. The Pope died

In future, if Prince Charles decides to re-marry and Liverpool wins another European crown, Please warn the Pope

Bryan

The February meeting of the club was in the new venue at the Robic Hotel in Pontivy. Instead of a formal presentation nine members spoke for five minutes on subjects dear to their hearts.

Peter Davenport endeavoured to instruct us in the gentle art of expences fiddling at Rolls Royce.

Tony Rickards acquainted us with indigenous daffodils and an acquaintance who he thinks was responsible for the infestation of hedgehogs on one of the Scottish isles.

Richard England told us about a restaurant in Beirut that was here one day and gone the next.

Ilse Baldock recounted her experiences with friendly ghosts in East Sussex.

Margarite England frightened us with tales of white water rafting in Colorado.

John Harris pointed out some topical news stories with unlikely headlines.

John Keeping told us about his national service experiences in Hong Kong.

Geoff Baldock talked about Sri Lanka as a holiday destination.

Edourd de Vin gave us a potted history of his career in business in Holland.

Val Davenport and Tony Dyson were unfortunately unable to speak as there was no time left They have "volunteered" to be first when we next venture into the realms of fantasy !

The meeting was followed by a very good lunch in the main restaurant. All in all an auspicious start to the new venue. Ed.

## A revelation with an Incredibly Big Message (IBM):

Well, you might have thought that you knew how the Internet started,  
but here's the TRUE story ...

In ancient Israel, it came to pass that a trader by the name of  
Abraham Com did take unto himself a young wife by the name of Dot.  
And Dot Com was a comely woman, broad of shoulder and long of leg.

Indeed, she was often called Amazon Dot Com.

And she said unto Abraham, her husband: "Why dost thou travel so far  
from town to town with thy goods when thou canst trade without ever  
leaving thy tent?"

And Abraham did look at her - as though she were several saddle bags  
short of a camel load, but simply said: "How, dear?"

And Dot replied: "I will place drums in all the towns and drums in  
between to send messages saying what you have for  
sale, and they will reply telling you who hath the best price.

And the sale can be made on the drums and delivery made by Uriah's  
Pony Stable (UPS)."

Abraham thought long and decided he would let Dot have her way with  
the drums. And the drums rang out and were an immediate success.  
Abraham sold all the goods he had at the top price, without ever having  
to move from his tent.

To prevent neighbouring countries from overhearing what the drums were  
saying, Dot devised a system that only she and the drummers knew. It was  
called Must Send Drum Over Sound (MSDOS), and she also developed  
a language to transmit ideas and pictures - Hebrew To The People (HTTP)

But this success did arouse envy. A man named Maccabia did secrete  
himself inside Abraham's drum and began to siphon off some of  
Abraham's business. But he was soon discovered, arrested and prosecuted -  
for insider trading.

And the young men did take to Dot Com's trading as doth the greedy  
horsefly take to camel dung.

They were called Nomadic Ecclesiastical Rich Dominican Sybarites, or  
NERDS.

And lo, the land was so feverish with joy at the new riches and the  
deafening sound of drums that no one noticed that the real riches were  
going to that enterprising drum dealer, Brother William of Gates, who  
bought off every drum maker in the land.

And indeed did insist on drums to be made that would work only with  
Brother Gates' drumheads and drumsticks.

And Dot did say: "Oh, Abraham, what we have started is being taken  
over by others."

And Abraham looked out over the Bay of Ezekiel , or Ebay as it came to  
be known. He said: "We need a name that reflects what we are."

And Dot replied: "Young Ambitious Hebrew Owner Operators."  
"YAHOO," said Abraham.

And because it was Dot's idea, they named it YAHOO Dot Com.

Abraham's cousin, Joshua, being the young Gregarious Energetic Educated  
Kid (GEEK) that he was, soon started using Dot's drums to locate things around  
the countryside. It soon became known as God's Own Official Guide to Locating  
Everything (GOOGLE)

And that is how it all began. So now you know !



Club Christmas dinner at l'Aiglon 2010

# A CIRCUMSCRIBED VIEW OF TOPICAL EVENTS

UNE OPINION CIRCONSCRITE DES EVENEMENTS DU MOMENT  
(traduction française sur demande)

Par/By « Circumspector »

Where have they all gone, the knowledgeable arabists of yore ? Commentaries on the present situation in the Middle East and the wider issue of Islamic influence are, by and large, superficial and bordering sometimes on the hysterical. A profound understanding of the Muslim mentality is singularly lacking, as is that of the historical development of Muslim philosophy, poetry, and studies of astronomy, science and mathematics, to say nothing of spectacular architecture, all of which formed the nucleus of cultural development throughout North Africa, the Middle East, a substantial part of the Iberian peninsula, and much further afield. We do not seem to produce the likes of Sir Richard Burton in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nor Wilfred Thesiger in the 20<sup>th</sup>, although I suppose that Frank Gardner of the BBC through his education, experience, notably in Egypt and Saudi, and instinctive “feel”, has more insight than the so-called expert pundits, regularly dusted down and trotted out in front of the cameras to deliver yet another inane “overview” of what is going on. Ah me! Where will it all end, I say to myself? How does one find one’s way through the labyrinthine opinions of THE SUN on the subject of Muslim immigration “ Here lies Ahmed Bin Ali, called latterly Fitzwarren; there is a corner of an English field, that is forever foreign” to the PC attitudes of those who see only good and validity in anyone, provided that person is not British!

Well, one place to start could be to try to understand the Muslim religion, and how it developed into the present day mish-mash of conflicting interpretations of the Koran in relation to armed conflict in “the cause”, i.e. terrorism, women’s dress, or the imbibing of ardent liquors, much honoured in the swallowing than in the observance (I having witnessed the antics of dish-dasha clad gentlemen in Parisian hotels at the start of Ramadan!)

Mohammed, who was born in Mecca in 570 and died in Medina in 632, is considered by Muslims to be the last prophet in the monotheistic Abrahamic cycle through his revelations. These revelations of the word of God came to him from the Archangel Gabriel who appeared to him in the grotto of Hira when he was 40 years old. (Not much is known of his earlier life, except that he, apocryphally no doubt, was the paragon of all the virtues physical and spiritual). For the next 22 years until his death he recited the stanzas in quatrain form, much like the Rubaiyat, to his friends who wrote them down and the Q’ran or Koran as we know it, was compiled in its present form some 70 years later.

Non-Muslims tend to consider Mohammed as the founder of the Islamic religion and a religious, political and military arab leader. He was all this, of course, but Muslims themselves believe him first and foremost to be the greatest ever prophet, not to be praised but to be honoured. Indeed, every time his name is mentioned, the words “who is to be honoured” are also uttered. The tenets of Allah, as expounded via the verses of the Koran, achieved wide prominence, not to say notoriety, in the Arabian peninsula, and engendered not a little enmity by the same token. This led to armed conflict between Mohammed and his followers and the leaders both temporal and spiritual in Medina and elsewhere. The first victory of Mohammed over the Medinan leader Abd Allah ibn Ubaiz ibn Salul (and with him the Medinan jews) inspired him and his companions to greater confidence in their cause; and when Mecca attacked the Muslims in 624, the latter achieved a great victory over the former at the battle of Badri. This battle which opposed 317 muslim soldiers against around 1000 meccans was the first one, stricto sensu, fought by a muslim army, and the effect of this victory was so widespread that Mohammed’s influence inflamed religious thought throughout the Mediterranean, so much so that within a couple of centuries the religion of Islam was practised in much of the then developed world.

However much a Muslim may espouse democratic principles, this can never be on all fours with the concept of democracy as it is understood by “the West”, for the simple reason that theocracy comes before democracy in order of supervening importance. The very word “Muslim” means a person who voluntarily submits him or herself to Allah, according to the Abrahamic theocratic principle.

This most certainly does not mean that a Muslim espouses terrorism as a means to wider islamisation of

the world, or violent proselytising to that end; but it does mean that every “democratic decision” is taken with an eye on what they consider to be the wish of Allah. Thus, the sectarian conflict in Bahrein between the Sunni ruler and the mostly Shi’ite population should not necessarily cause alarm, because even if the Bahreini monarchy becomes the Bahreini republic, this does not ineluctably mean a move from opulent peace to murderous terrorist rule! It could do, though.

The house of cards now being witnessed in North Africa has its roots in the tribal hegemonies in place before the First World War and before the Treaty of Sèvres arbitrarily carved out of the former Ottoman empire zones of influence by means of Mandated territories. Okay, France, you have already colonised Algeria from 1840 onwards, so you may as well have Morocco and Tunisia. The Brits can have Libya, Egypt and the Sudan and let’s throw in Palestine, Iraq and Iran. As a counterweight, France can have Syria and Lebanon. The Hashemite Kingdom can stay as is. The whole of the North African countries now successively in revolt against their respective kleptocratic dictators were from 909 AD until the late Middle Ages part of the Fatimid Empire, a dynasty founded by Abdullah al-Mahdi Billah, who traced his ancestry back to Mohammed via his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali-ibn-Abi Tâlib, the first Shi’a Imam. Muslims have very long memories. To them, the unspeakable crusades, which took advantage of a weakened Muslim world through sectarian squabbling, took place only yesterday. The North African gene pool includes them all from the Berbers in the West to the Bedouin in the East, and imbues their very lives.

We would do well to bear this ancestry and common goal in mind.



**Christmas dinner at l’Aiglon**

**THE “TORREY CANYON” STRIKES AGAIN** (*this the tale of a rather eventful flight for the MOD back in the old days when flying was fun if not potentially hazardous.* )

It was a fine clear crisp November day in 1967. After a leisurely breakfast at the Olde Bell pub in Malmesbury, we made the short journey to Lyneham. Arriving eventually in the briefing room without any of the security one would normally expect these days. The inbound crew had supervised the loading the previous evening so all that remained for us to do was check the weather and order the fuel. The navigator worked out the flight plan to Istanbul, ultimate destination Singapore, while we pilots carefully checked the diplomatic clearances, without these the flight would have real problems reaching it's destination. Even with the correct clearances, at times flights could have trouble and it was not unknown for “dash” or money to have to fill the apparent short fall in political expertise. A further complication was the fact that as this was a M.O.D charter, not all the countries on the normal route would allow military charters in their airspace. The iron curtain was still very much in place. Initially we would have to route round Yugoslavia, and the Italians could be touchy about military flights, not wanting to upset anyone as they had yet to decide which side to be on!

Eventually the problems were, if not resolved, at least talked about and anticipated and it was time to go out to the aircraft. There she stood G-ATAB a DC7b, affectionately known as the “Torrey Canyon” after the tanker that had foundered on the Scilly Isles polluting large portions of the south coast with it's oil spill. The flight engineers had completed the refueling, the load master the load sheet, the navigator declared himself happy (or as happy as navigators ever were!) so there was nothing left but to get the show on the road.

Because of the route and timings the flight required a “heavy crew”. Captain, senior first officer, first officer, two flight engineers and navigator, in the back one load master. Start-up was normal and having obscured most of Wiltshire in a dense cloud of oily smoke we taxied out to the runway backfiring in super lean as we went, but at least this noisy progress ensured there were no birds on the runway. The run-up failed to find the dud recycled spark plugs that our engineering department usually tried to hide away in the engines, just to keep us on our toes! Obviously the crew the night before had already found and changed them before leaving Gatwick.

The climb to initial cruise of nine thousand feet was uneventful, we would have to climb later to cross the Alps but for the time being this would do. Four hours had passed, the Alps were now behind us and everything was set for an early evening landing in Istanbul, there had been considerable discussion as to which cafe we would honour for our meal. The engineer on the panel was still completing his line training but had no compunction in warning that there maybe a problem on No 1 engine as the oil contents were going down faster than the others although the ignition analyzer showed no abnormal patterns. The screen engineer came up and advised that we should press on and monitor the engine, hopefully it was only an indication fault. Just north of Brindisi the oil contents entered the caution level and it became obvious that Istanbul was not to be our first port of call. Corfu was agreed as the most suitable alternate, as it was a company destination and we could therefore hope for some kind of assistance, or at least co-operation.

The oil temperature started to rise so the engine was shut down and the diversion to Corfu completed without incident. As there were no other aircraft on the apron we were given the prime slot in front of the terminal and as we shut down, about fifty gallons of very black dirty oil fell out of No 1 nacelle all over their nice clean white concrete. The engineers got the “tin” off and found that an engine drain plug had fallen out. The initial welcome had now cooled considerably and ATC promptly closed the airfield, so we were stuck for the night. By careful juggling of the schedule and some creative use of the flight time limitations we found that we could still arrive in Singapore on schedule after a minimum rest.

Next morning we were ready to depart as soon as the airfield opened, first stop Tehran, overflying Istanbul on the way. The run-up was normal so off with the brakes and off we went. At V1 - 10 fire warning No3 engine, abandon the take off and taxi back to the apron! (*V1 is the minimum speed for the aircraft to be able to fly safely*) The Greeks didn't want to know, and parked us as far away as possible from the terminal, offering no assistance whatsoever, not even a pair of steps.

The engineers got into the engine and after an hour pronounced that they had found a fire wire fault

and we were now fit for another go! This time all was normal and we were on our way. Tehran came and went, arrival Karachi in the wee hours of next day, so no meal or party. Later that day we took off again for a refueling stop in Colombo. In 1968 India was flirting with the Soviet Union so military flights were not allowed. Eventually the arrival in Singapore was one hour early on the original schedule, not bad!

Two days later, having over indulged ourselves in many ways, we were ready to start the return leg to Nicosia where we were to change the ships papers before a series of flights from Tel Aviv. Taxi out and run-up were normal at about 100 kts on take off, fire warning No 2 engine, this was becoming a habit! As we cleared the runway I opened the side window and had a quick look, every thing looked normal, engine was shut down and fire warning had stopped, so we decided not to fire the extinguisher bottles, another false warning? Also we had no spare fire bottles, not that that should have influenced anything. Five minutes into the taxi back, one of the off duty crew members came up and announced that “the fire had gone out” We were horrified having convinced ourselves that it was a false warning.

After four hours trouble shooting with the aid of JAL engineers nothing had been found amiss, so we had to assume that the fire was old carbon exhaust deposits ignited by the PRT (*power recovery turbine*). Armed with this dubious explanation, we agreed to try again. This time we were successful and the remainder of the flight to Tel Aviv via Colombo, Bahrein, Beirut and Nicosia, went without a hitch. Here it was unanimously decided to have the aircraft cleaned of potential fire material before attempting the next series of flights, (30 Pregnant cows to Tehran). But that’s a whole new story!

Geoff Baldock

**The clock of life is wound but once,  
And no man has the power  
To tell where the hands will stop,  
At late or early hour.**

**To lose ones wealth is sad indeed,  
To lose ones health is worse,  
To lose ones soul is such a loss  
As no man can restore.**

**The present only is our own,  
Live, love, toil with a will,  
Place no faith in tomorrow  
For the clock may then be still.**

FORTHCOMING DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

APRIL 12  
THE HISTORY OF MAGIC & ILLUSION BY PAUL DUKE

MAY 11  
COMBINED MEETING WITH PROBUS ST MALO, DINAN, JERSEY & PONTIVY.  
PRESENTATION BY GORDON RAYFIELD “THE DAMS RAID BY 617  
SQUADRON—OPERATION CHASTISE”