



JANUARY/JANVIER 2012

LA PLUME DE PROBUS PONTIVY



I was a little disappointed but unsurprised to find that I was not on Herman von Rompuy's Christmas list when he despatched his Christmas gifts of The World Book of Happiness. It seems that this graduate of Latin and Greek with a rather dour reputation wishes to spread a little joy, which struck me as a very appropriate way to start the New Year, following the diet of unremitting gloom which the media has fed to us in the preceding twelve months.

Apparently the tome in question is "a collection of short essays by 100 happiness experts ..." which set me wondering "How do you qualify to become a happiness expert?" But enough of that because surely the members of Probus Club de Pontivy are already full of happiness.

First I must pay tribute to the dedication that my predecessor Tony Dyson has shown over the past two years and to the high standards that he has set, not least in the literary field where his erudite contributions will hopefully be maintained. This dedication was most recently demonstrated when he (and Barbara) represented our club at L'Assemblée Générale (French Probus AGM) hosted by Probus Le Touquet, (the first club in France) who celebrate their 20th

anniversary last year. Despite considerable personal inconvenience and expense Tony was insistent that he should fulfil his commitment to report on our behalf for which I am sure we are all most grateful. (A report on Tony's visit to the conference appears elsewhere in this issue.)



Our club is probably unique

are expatriates. Consequently we meet less frequently and have a much greater membership turnover than other clubs. With the changing of the guard it seems an appropriate moment to take stock of the story so far. Geoff Baldock has previously recalled how he and Arthur Curtis initiated the original concept which led to the inaugural meeting early in 2008. There being only four people present the official roles were naturally divided between them. Thereafter membership grew steadily with meetings initially being held in Noyal Pontivy at the "1703" Restaurant and by the end of the year attendance had already reached 20. It was soon decided to move from the "1703" and following one or two alternative

experiments we settled on L'Aiglon in Pontivy.

Following a year of consolidation in 2009 the club was awarded its French Probus Charter as a result of sterling efforts of Geoff, Tony and Val. 2011 recorded a first in the form of a joint meeting with the French clubs Armor (Dinard), Emeraude (St Malo) and Jersey which may lead to further

President's Premier Promulgation

in that it draws its membership from a huge area whilst all the members

exchanges in future.

Currently our membership is 22 but there have been many changes since the early years. Only Geoff and myself survive from the original gang of four but we were joined soon after by Peter and Val Davenport. By the end of 2008 membership had reached 20. Since then given the expatriate nature of our club we have welcomed many new members but lost corresponding numbers principally due to ill health or return to the UK. In the past year it has been a particular pleasure to welcome Will Carter, Barrie and Romaine Cole, Eduard de Vin, Jim and Eileen Clancy, David and Judy Jones and Louis Sallons and to see Jan Thomée in our midst again. I am confident that they not only enrich our experience and give us a more international dimension but most importantly bring a new youthful vigour to our proceedings!

The year ended with an absolutely splendid Christmas dinner at the Restaurant Robic, Pontivy, which was superbly organised and orchestrated by our new secretarial duo of Chris and Penny Evers. Everyone seemed to enjoy the evening immensely and the proceeds of the raffle enabled the club to subsidise the event significantly. I enter my period of office with the knowledge that

with such support and with the aid of the experience of Tony and Geoff and now Peter as Vice President I can move forward with confidence. Finally in this context I must thank Val for her contribution as Secretary extraordinaire since the very early days. She has worked tirelessly on our behalf and never shirked from reminding any officer who might have been forgetful or even

dilatory! Val is now "retiring" to the posts of Newsletter Editor and Webmaster.

In 2012 I hope that we shall be able to broaden our activities and that more members will feel able to contribute either by way of presentations at meetings or through La Plume de Pontivy. Please feel free to put forward any suggestions or thoughts that you may have to any of the

JOHN HARRIS

LA PREMIERE PROMULGATION DU PRESIDENT

J'étais un peu déçu mais pas tellement étonné que je ne figurais pas sur la liste des vœux de fin d'année établie par Herman van Rompuy lorsqu'il a disseminé ses cadeaux de Noël sous la forme du « Livre des Félicités Mondiales ». Il semblerait que ce classiciste diplômé en Gréco-Latin à la réputation austère souhaite répandre de la joie autour de lui. Cette façon de célébrer l'aube de l'année nouvelle est très opportun, me semble-t-il, venant à la suite d'un régime de mélancolie inlassable que nous ont servi les médias tout au long des douze mois précédents. Il paraîtrait que le bouquin dont il est question représente « un recueil d'essais courts par 100 experts en bonheur... » ce qui m'a fait réfléchir « Que faut-il comme formation pour devenir un expert en bonheur ? ». Mais assez de tout cela car les membres du Probus Club de Pontivy sont, à coup sûr, déjà munis d'un grand bonheur.

Tout d'abord, il m'incombe de rendre hommage au dévouement démontré par mon prédécesseur Tony Dyson au cours des deux dernières années ainsi qu'au modèle qu'il a établi surtout au niveau littéraire où ses apports érudits seront maintenus, espérons-le. Il a fait preuve récemment de ce dévouement quand, accompagné par Barbara, il était la représentant de notre Club à l'Assemblée Générale de Probus France, organisée par le Bureau National de Liaison avec le concours de Probus Le Touquet, celui-ci étant le premier club établi en France et qui fêtait les 20 années

d'existence au mois de décembre. Malgré un dérangement et des dépenses personnelles considérables, Tony a insisté pour que l'engagement du Club vis-à-vis le BNL soit respecté au moyen de sa présence à l'A.G. et pour qu'un procès-verbal de la réunion soit présenté à nos membres, chose pour lequel nous lui sommes reconnaissants.

Notre club est vraisemblablement unique dans le sens qu'il réunit des membres, tous expatriés, vivant bien souvent très loin. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous nous réunissons moins fréquemment, et avons un taux de renouvellements des membres que d'autres clubs. Le changement de la fonction présidentielle me permet donc de saisir ce moment pour évaluer le point où nous sommes arrivés actuellement.

Geoff Baldock a déjà rappelé comment lui et Arthur Curtis ont conçu le moyen d'établir un club ici à Pontivy, ce qui a mené à la réunion inaugurale au printemps de 2008. Comme ils n'étaient que quatre à cette réunion, les postes de direction ont été partagés entre eux. Par la suite, le nombre de membres a augmenté régulièrement. Au début, les réunions se tenaient au restaurant « 1703 » à Noyal Pontivy, mais à la fin de cette année-là, on pouvait compter sur 20 assistants. Il a été décidé donc de changer de crèmerie, et après avoir essayé l'une ou l'autre possibilités, notre choix s'est fixé sur L'Aiglon à Pontivy.

Une année de consolidation a suivi, et en 2009 le club s'est vu attribuer sa

Charte du réseau de Probus France grâce aux efforts suprêmes de la part de Geoff, Tony et Val. L'année 2011 s'est distinguée par une réunion entre les clubs français d'Armor (Dinard) et Emeraude (Saint Malo) se joignant à nous et au club de Jersey. Cette initiative pourrait mener à d'autres échanges à l'avenir.

Actuellement nous comptons 22 membres, mais on a vu beaucoup de changements depuis nos débuts. Seuls Geoff et moi-même sommes les survivants de la « Bande de Quatre », mais tôt après nous étions rejoints par Peter et Val Davenport. A la fin 2008, nous étions 20 membres. Depuis lors, nous avons pu accueillir pas mal de nouveaux membres, mais en revanche nous en avons perdu un nombre semblable suite à des problèmes de santé ou de déménagements vers le R-U.

En 2011, nous avons eu le plaisir d'étendre notre bienvenue à Will Carter, Barrie et Romaine Cole, Eduard de Vin, Jim et Eileen Glancy, David et Judy Jones et Louis Sallons, et de revoir parmi nous Jan Thomée. J'ai la certitude que leur présence enrichit l'ensemble de nos expériences, nous fournit une plus grande dimension internationale mais surtout nous apporte une nouvelle force de jeunesse à nos délibérations. L'année s'est achevée par un dîner de Noël réellement splendide à l'hôtel Robic à Pontivy organisé et orchestré d'une façon magistrale par notre nouveau duo de secrétariat Chris et Penny Evers. Tous présents avaient l'air de se réjouir royalement et le

montant des recettes du tombola a permis au club d'apporter des subsides significatifs à l'événement. Je commence ma présidence sachant qu'avec un tel appui ainsi qu'avec l'aide de l'expérience de Tony et de Geoff, rejoints maintenant par Peter dans son rôle de Vice-président, je peux avancer en toute confiance. Finalement à ce propos je me dois de remercier Val de sa contribution en

tant que Secrétaire extraordinaire, et ce depuis les tous premiers jours. Elle a travaillé inlassablement pour promouvoir les intérêts du club, et ne s'est jamais abstenue de rappeler à l'ordre quelque officier qui se soit montré négligent ou même trainard ! Val se « retire » vers les postes de Rédactrice du bulletin trimestriel et Webmaster. Dans le courant de 2012, j'espère que

nous aurons la possibilité d'élargir notre champ d'activités, et qu'un nombre croissant de membres entrevera l'opportunité d'apporter leur grain de sel, soit par le truchement de présentations lors des réunions, soit au moyen de La Plume de Pontivy. Libre à vous de nous faire de telles propositions ou pensées en les communiquant à un membre du comité.

JOHN HARRIS

Review of FASTER THAN THE SUN

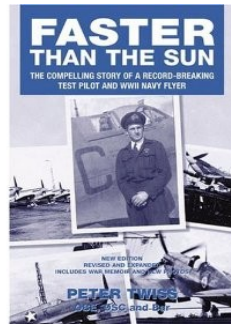
Peter Twiss OBE, DSC & Bar

This is a rather specialised book for flying enthusiasts, written in the days shortly after the second world war, when Britain still had an aviation industry as did most other European countries.

The author, Peter Twiss, had served an interesting and varied career in the fleet air-arm during the war and had survived. He was offered a job as a test pilot with Fairey Aviation and was lucky enough to be involved with the Fairey Delta two. This was an aircraft designed to investigate supersonic flying and was financed by the government of the day, it was never envisaged that it might become a fighter and was purely experimental.

In those days there were no simulators and a test pilots career was hazardous and sometimes extremely dangerous.

The book concentrates on the very slow and tortuous progress of the series of flights leading up to the supersonic stage. Having established the high speed qualities of the aircraft, not



without problems including "a wheels up" landing when the gear refused to come down, the company decided to try for the world speed record.

The government pen pushers were less than keen on this idea as they saw no financial gain in such a project and in fact insisted on the record flights being part of the experimental programme, and would not extend the budget.

The record at the time stood at 822mph held by Col Hayes an American flying a Super Sabre. The FD2 was consistently flying at over 1000mph but the problem was how to measure and verify the speed under the strict rules as laid down by the controlling bodies. The book concentrates on the practical problems of the record and for me, not enough on the technical difficulties posed by the aircraft itself.

Nevertheless it is a good read and brings back happy memories of the days when the "Great" in Great Britain had an altogether different connotation.

Reviewed by Geoffrey Baldock



TAXWATCH

A whole host of measures have and are taking place within the French Tax System in 2012, these include:-

1. Raising social charges from 12.3% to 13.5%.
2. Increasing the lower 5.5% TVA rat to 7.0%.
3. An extra 3% tax on high earners.
4. Capital gains tax increases and an increase from 15 to 30 years before exemption of non principal properties etc.
5. The right of tax investigation on previous years has been increased from 3 to 10 years.
6. Inheritance or 'succession' is being looked at between member countries.



Jérôme was Guest Speaker at our January 2012 Monthly Meeting.

He was born in Angers in January 1966. He lived in Paris until the end of his studies.

After obtaining his pharmacist doctor diploma, he went into military service and was pharmacist on board a French naval vessel. The naval vessel navigated from Gibraltar to the Guinean Gulf with stops in Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Ghana.

Then he went to Cambodia as the Head of “Pharmacist without Borders”, in Phnom Penh. There he was in charge of different programs:

- Rehabilitation of the national laboratory controlling the quality of drugs.
- Prevention of sexually transmitted disease among risk population including: policemen, military, mine clearance experts, sex workers.

After this, he worked as a clinical research associate in Paris, for PAREXEL. He was in charge of purposing clinical studies to physicians, for obtaining marketing authorisation. During that period he went back to University and studied for a pharmaceutical marketing degree. He then worked for Procter and Gamble, as a representative, in Bordeaux. He visited all the cardiologists in the south west of France, to promote certain drugs. After this he was recruited by Pfizer, as a product manager. He was in charge of, Norvasc, to control blood pressure, Cardura for benign prostatic hypertrophy, and Viagra.

He then joined Schering Plough, as a marketing manager in Hepatitis C.

Then, after working for two years in different retails pharmacy in Paris, he moved to Pontivy, and bought the Pharmacie des Arcades. He has now been living in Pontivy for 7 years with his wife (who is also a pharmacist – she is head of the pharmacy in Intermarché in Pontivy) and their 3 children.

JÉRÔME FORIESTIER “THE HEALTH SYSTEM IN FRANCE”

The French health care system is largely financed by government national health insurance.

Most general physicians are in private practice but draw their income from the public insurance funds. These funds have never gained self-management responsibility. Instead, the government has taken responsibility for the financial and operational management of health insurance (by setting premium levels related to income and determining the prices of goods and services refunded). The French National Health Service generally refunds patients 70% of most health care costs, and 100% for people with serious or chronic illnesses (with vital risks, such as cancers, AIDS, or severe mental illness, where the person becomes very dependant of his medical assistance and protection) and waives their co-payment charges.



The entire population must pay compulsory health insurance. The insurers are non-profit agencies that annually participate in negotiations with the state regarding the overall funding of health care in France. There are three main funds, the largest of which covers 84% of the population and the other two a further 12%. A premium is deducted from all employees' pay automatically. After paying the doctor's or dentist's fee, a proportion is reimbursed. This is around 75 to 80%, but can be as much as 85%. The balance is effectively a co-payment paid by the patient but it can also be recovered if the patient pays a regular premium to a voluntary health insurance scheme.

Under recent rules (the coordinated consultation procedure, in French: ‘*parcours de soins coordonné*’), general practitioners (‘*médecin généraliste*’ or ‘*docteur*’) are expected to act as "gate keepers" who refer patients to a specialist or a hospital when necessary. However the system offers free choice of the reference doctor, which is not restricted to only a general practitioner and may still be a specialist or a doctor in a public or private hospital. The incentive is financial in that expenses are reimbursed at much lower rates for patients who go direct to another doctor (except for dentists, ophthalmologists, gynaecologists and psychiatrists); vital emergencies are still exempt from requiring the advice from the reference doctor.

As costs are borne by the patient and then reimbursed, patients have freedom of choice of where to receive health care services.

Around 65% of hospital beds in France are provided by public hospitals, around 15% by private non-profit organizations, and 20% by for-profit companies.

Examples of Fees and Reimbursements

	Fee	% reimbursed	Patient charge
Generalist consultation	23 €	70%	6,60 €
Specialist consultation	25 €	70%	7,50 €
Psychiatrist consultation	37 €	70%	11,10 €
Cardiologist consultation	49 €	70%	14,17 €
Filling a cavity	19,28 € – 48,20 €	70%	5,78 € – 14,46 €
Root canal	93,99 €	70%	28,20 €
Teeth cleaning	28,92 €	70%	8,68 €

The *médecin généraliste* is responsible for patient long-term care. This implies prevention, education, care of diseases and traumas that do not require a specialist. They also follow severe diseases day-to-day (between acute crises that may require a specialist). They survey epidemics, fulfil a legal role (consultation

of traumas that can bring compensation, certificates for the practice of a sport, death certificates, certificates for hospitalization without consent in case of mental incapacity), and a role in emergency care (they can be called by the *SAMU*, the emergency medical service).

Health insurance

The model of finance in the French health care system is based on a social insurance model, contributions to the scheme are based on income. Prior to reform of the system, contributions were 12.8% of gross earnings levied on the employer and 6.8% levied directly on the employee. The reforms extended the system so that the wealthier with capital income (and not just those with income from employment) also had to contribute; since then the 6.8% figure has dropped to 0.75% of earned income. In its place a wider levy based on total income has been introduced, gambling taxes are now redirected towards health care and recipients of social benefits also must contribute. Because the insurance is compulsory, the system is effectively financed by general taxation rather than traditional insurance (as typified by auto or home insurance, where risk levels determine premiums). Today, 95% of the population are covered by 3 main schemes. One for commerce and industry workers and their families, another for agricultural workers and lastly the national insurance fund for self-employed non-agricultural workers. All working people are required to pay a portion of their income into a health insurance fund, which mutualizes the risk of illness and which reimburses medical expenses at varying rates. Children and spouses of insured individuals are eligible for benefits, as well. The government has two responsibilities in this system:

The first is a government responsibility that fixes the rate at which medical expenses should be negotiated and it does this in two ways. The Ministry of Health directly negotiates prices of medicine with the manufacturers, based on the average price of sale observed in neighbouring countries. A board of doctors and experts decides if the medicine provides a valuable enough medical benefit to be reimbursed (note that most medicine is reimbursed, including homeopathy). In parallel, the government fixes the reimbursement rate for medical services; this means that a doctor is free to charge the fee that he wishes for a consultation or an examination, but the social security system will only reimburse it at the pre-set rate. These tariffs are set annually through negotiation with doctors' representative organisations.

The second – the government responsibility is oversight of health-insurance funds, to ensure that they are correctly managing the sums they receive, and to ensure oversight of the public hospital network.

Today, this system is more-or-less intact. All citizens and legal foreign residents of France are covered by one of these mandatory programs, which continue to be funded by worker participation. There are five different health-care funds, General, Independent,

Agricultural, Student, & Public Servants all reimbursed at the same rate. The government provides health care to those who are not covered by a mandatory regime (those who have never worked and who are not students, meaning the very rich or the very poor). This regime, unlike the worker-financed ones, is financed via general taxation and reimburses at a higher rate than the profession-based system for those who cannot afford to make up the difference. To counter the rise in health-care costs, the government has installed two plans, which require most people to declare a referring doctor in order to be fully reimbursed for specialist visits, and which installed a mandatory co-payment of 1€ for a doctor visit, 0.50€ for each prescribed medicine and a fee of 16–18€ per day for hospital stays and for expensive procedures. Such declaration is not required for children below 16 years old (because they already benefit from another protection program), for foreign visitors without residence in France (which will get benefits depending on existing international agreements between their own national health-care program and the French Social Security), or those benefiting from an health-care system of French overseas territories, and for those people that benefit from the minimum medical assistance.

Emergency medical services in France are provided by a mix of organisations under public health control, with the lead taken by a central control function called *SAMU*, which stands for '*Service d'Aide Médicale Urgente*' or urgent medical aid service. This central hub is supported by resources including first response vehicles or ambulances provided by the fire service and physician led ambulance provision from *SMUR* ('*Service Mobile d'Urgence et Réanimation*' - literally translated as mobile emergency and resuscitation service) which are 'mobile intensive care units' (*MICU*) that have one or more physicians on board.

France, along with the rest of the continental European Union uses the emergency telephone number 112, which gives access to police, fire and ambulance services, but emergency numbers '15' for *SAMU* and '18' for fire department *VSAV* ('*Véhicule de Secours et d'Assistance aux Victimes*') are more often used. The central component of *SAMU* is the dispatch centre where a medical regulation team of physicians and assistants has the task of analysing calls to decide on patient need.

Current performance on emergency calls is arrival at scene within 10 minutes, for 80% of responses, and within 15 minutes for 95% of responses.

While French doctors only earn about 60% of what UK doctors make, their expenses are reduced because they pay no tuition for medical school and malpractice insurance is less costly.

Like most countries, France faces problems of rising costs of prescription medication, increasing unemployment, and a large aging population. Average life expectancy in France at birth is 81 years.

Living in France, we all soon become very familiar with the very civilised custom of 'apéritifs'.

The problem sometimes can be what to offer your guests, which is a little different, when it comes around to your turn to act as the hosts. Well one of my favourites is Pineau des Charentes, yes French but not quite as commonly known as some of the other more classic apéritifs. Pineau des Charentes, (Pineau Charentais, or simply Pineau) is a regional French aperitif, made in the départements of Charente, Charente-Maritime and, to a much lesser extent, Dordogne in western France. While very popular within the region of production, it is less well-known in other regions of France and somewhat uncommon abroad (although it is apparently available in 'Oddbins').

It is a fortified wine (mistelle or vin de liqueur), made from a blend of lightly fermented grape must and Cognac eau-de-vie.

Pineau is also found as a home-made product in the neighbouring Deux-Sèvres and Vendée départements. In the Vendée there is also made a similar drink called "Troussepinetteé, which is often flavoured with pine or fruits such as pear.

According to legend, during the harvest of 1589, a winemaker accidentally added grape must into a barrel that he believed was empty but in fact contained eau de vie. The mixture was duly returned to the cellars for fermentation. A few years later, the barrel was retrieved and was found to contain the drink that is now associated with the region of Charente.

Pineau as one might expect comes as either white or red/rose varieties. The dominant white variety of Pineau is made using the grapes Ugni Blanc, Folle Blanche and Colombard, with occasional Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Montils. The mixture is aged for at least 18 months, including a minimum of 8 months in oak

Pineau des Charentes

barrels. The resulting drink is between 16 and 22% ABV (but in commercial practice nearly always 17%) and is traditionally a deep gold in colour, but colours and qualities vary from vineyard to vineyard, depending on the lie of the land, the soil composition and the grape used. The taste is predominantly sweet, but is balanced by both acidity and the



increased level of alcohol. Finer varieties are aged for over 5 years in barrel and often for several decades. The red and rosé varieties, very popular locally, are made from the grapes Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot, and are aged for at least 14 months, including a minimum of 8 months in oak barrels. The finished drink is again between 16 and 22% ABV (usually 17%) and varies between a deep mahogany brown colour and a very dark pink. The annual production of pineau is around 14,000,000 litres. Around 80% of this is made in the Charente-Maritime département. Its production is controlled under the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée 'vin de liqueur' classification, though it is not a wine in the ordinary sense. In principle the same producer grows the grapes, makes the wine and distills it into brandy, presses the fresh grape juice and then blends and matures the result. The geographical zone authorized for the production of Pineau des Charentes AOC is practically identical with that for Cognac, and in fact many of the artisanal producers of pineau (numbering several hundred) also sell their own Cognac.

When a good harvest is expected the

best grapes may be picked by hand, but most producers harvest most of their crop mechanically. Very strict rules and formulas for

the ratios of brandy and fresh grape juice are followed by each vintner and the process is even more tightly controlled for organic producers. The year of the pineau depends on the year of the eau de vie and not on the grape juice, as the juice must be freshly squeezed from freshly picked grapes - literally squeezed and mixed the same day as harvesting. The act of mixing the eau de vie with the fresh grape juice is referred to as "assemblage", assembly or blending. It stops the fermentation of the grape must through a process called "mutage".

An increasing number of vineyards in the area now produce and sell Pineau in which both the grape juice and the brandy come from organically-grown grapes. Their products have certification.

Like other fortified wines such as Sherry, Pineau des Charentes does not benefit from ageing. However, storing unopened bottles away from sources of light will do no harm to the wine, although bottles should be stored upright to reduce the exposed surface area. Once opened, Pineau des Charentes will keep for some time in the refrigerator. White Pineau is most usually served chilled at between 8°C and 10°C. But it can also be served with food too, and goes very well with poultry, fish and seafood, and blue cheese. In particular white Pineau is an excellent accompaniment to foie gras. Red Pineau as well as being served as an aperitif, also goes well with game dishes, soft cheeses, fruit and chocolate puddings. In addition Pineau is sometimes used to make cocktails and is also an ingredient in cooking, for example in the making of delicious sauces for duck dishes. Pineau des Charentes should be served in a tulip-shaped glass such as a sherry glass. The taper of this type of glass better enhances the aroma of the wine.

Happy hosting!

Sam Melior



Evacuation by John Keeping

My memories of being evacuated in 1940 are very patchy. I remember standing on Gosport Station together with dozens of my school friends and feeling the excitement of my first train journey. I don't think that we knew where we were going, why we were leaving home and how long it might be for. Of course, no one knew the answer to the last question, it must have been very hard for Mum and the other parents.

The first night away was spent on the floor of a school in Stockbridge. It was probably winter because I do remember that cold and homesickness kept me awake most of the night. My recollections of Stockbridge are mainly negative and I seem to remember three events of that short period. I have always had a "lazy eye" and can remember being taken by car to a hospital probably in Andover where I had drops. These stung, but never really improved the sight in my left eye. I can remember falling in the small river that runs under the main street; seeing Australian troops marching through the town, they looked wonderful in their wide brimmed hats and shorts, rather like cowboys.

My mother later told me that she complained about the way that I was treated at Stockbridge and so I was moved to another home in Lower Upham, a beautiful cottage immediately opposite the church. It was my first real experience of rural life and that period and the one to follow had a tremendous impact on me. I loved the pond and everything in it particularly the tiny creatures. I loved eating crab apples, Sloes, blackberries, hazel nuts, chestnuts and many other things that I found on my way to and from school in Bishops Waltham. I loved climbing trees and investigating new parts of the woods near the house. The lady who looked after me was Mrs White. She was the housekeeper to Mrs Potts (well named) who owned the very large house nearby. Mr White built model aeroplanes in a room at the top of the cottage. They were very skilfully made and I can still smell the glue.

I'm not sure why I left Lower Upham but I do remember standing in a line of children outside Durley School to be selected by new carers. They stood on one side of the road and the children on the other. Whether we had any involvement in the process I don't know but I was very lucky and went to stay with the Headmistress of the school Mrs Vaughn, who lived opposite at Brook House. Here, I was expected to attend church and Sunday school regularly and was fascinated by the stained glass

windows and wonderful music but even at that early age had serious doubts about the logic of religions. Apart from that, life at Durley was even more exciting than at Lower Upham. There are too many happy memories to list, but those that stand out are; picking wild mushrooms for breakfast in the nearby field before going to school, dropping two sticks in the brook and guessing which would appear first from under the bridge, finding a spring, the source of the brook in the woods and the wonderful smell of roses in Mrs Vaughn's garden. She had a gardener and a maid and the house seemed very large and impressive at the time but it seems to shrink each time I make another nostalgic return visit. One other important memory has stuck which indicates the change in weather pattern over the past fifty years. Each winter, snow would be several feet deep, the brook would become solid ice and icicles two feet long would hang from the school gutter. These made wonderful swords and ice-lollies.

In early 1944 evacuation came to an end. Allied troops were pushing the Germans back and they had abandoned ideas of attacking Britain. Air raids were no more and when at last I returned to live with Mum in Gosport there was a happy optimistic atmosphere everywhere except for those families that wouldn't be seeing sons, fathers and brothers again.

What nine letter word in the English language is still a word when eight letters are removed one by one?

STARTLING
STARTING
STARING
STRING
STING
SING
SIN
IN
I

MEET THE MEMBERS

EILEEN & JIM GLANCY

We have been expatriates all our lives working in Africa, Borneo and China with only about 7 years out of a 40 year career in the UK so in retirement it felt logical to find a kindred country (i.e. Celtic as Eileen is Irish and myself Scottish) rather than back to our own countries. We had visited Brittany many times and it seemed a logical choice.

Brittany has lived up to the image that we expected with a sound natural way of life without pressure that a more modern way of life involves these days. One of the biggest challenges is of course the language but our French neighbours are very cordial and friendly and we are hoping to expand the school O level French as time goes by.

I was influenced by the idea of exploration (Livingstone as a Scottish hero of course and books about Africa: White and Blue Nile by Alan Moorhead etc – my brother had also gone to Nigeria in the 60's so there was an incentive to try my hand as well).

My mother had come down from Shetland in the 1920's as a girl of 18 to find work in Edinburgh and one of my sisters emigrated to the USA in the early 1950's.

I sort of always wanted to be a teacher probably because it was, for me, the best of the three choices that at the time a catholic education emphasised and promoted: be a priest, a doctor or a teacher. Teaching abroad is a far more exciting prospect than the restricted system that has evolved in the UK and I may not have survived teaching had I remained in the UK.

I have a smattering of Nyanja/Chewa; a few words of Swahili, some Malay and some Chinese Mandarin. My French is coming along.

The freedom to suit yourself and programme your day is very nice; although it takes time to adjust out of the confinement of an ordered day.

Editor's Note: Jim will give a presentation on Life in Malawi 1969-1989 at the February Monthly Meeting.

ADDITIONS TO THE DENT FAMILY

Marian & Nick's First Grandchild—Alastair Paul Cross—was born on 14 August 2011, weighing in at 9lbs.

Their Daughter (Sarah) & Son-in-Law (Anthony) live in Melton Mowbray



PROUD GRANDDAD NICK



SARAH
&
ANTHONY

Home Thoughts from Abroad

By Tony Rickards

That evocative title triggers memories for all of us of idealistic days of youth. Immediately other titles and opening lines clamber out from the box of long term memory.

Home thoughts now for me after living for four years in rural Brittany following seventy in England have a deep poignancy. Our younger son and his daughter, our only grand daughter, live in England still as does my sister and her two daughters. My wife's remaining family and notably her sister, live there too.

Beyond family and friends there are many thoughts clambering for attention and especially in these years since we left England.

Nothing is written here about 'Broken Britain', disgraced self interested politicians, or even the continuing era of financial and economic incompetence. There is the painful reality that much of what we read and hear about in UK is becoming dangerously close to us here in downtown Brittany.

I should be concerned about the proposed English parliamentary constituency reorganisation because it is likely that Manchester and Salford will be merged.

Strangely I am not, that is not yet. Manchester and Salford and their industrial and social pasts are prominent in my home thoughts. Manchester I have come to realise is my home city.

I cannot reflect upon the re-discovered wisdom that a sound education system is an essential ingredient in 'growing a new economy' or the role played in Britain and continuing to today of immigrant populations.

Who dares to think about Manufacturing? I have switched off from the report that many more lobbyists, who ever they are, and media persons, attended one of the Nations major political party annual conferences than did members of that party: very strange.

What thoughts are prominent in my mind then? I planted some roses over the last two years and they are doing well. The French varieties have better perfume than those from UK. No need for nostalgia here then other than to think about my Dad's garden. I also grew some sweet peas this year and they thrived even in our garden where the prominent implement is a pick axe.

Sweet peas of course require water and some nitrogen for their early growth. No profound loss here either.

Home thoughts: I guess fish and chips are at the top of my list of deprivations living here in Brittany. Fish and



chips and a pint or two of nice traditional bitter served in a traditional pub at the correct temperature.

We returned to England three times this year and yes fish and chips were enjoyed.

Travelling from modernised Manchester back through two hundred industrial years to Todmorden we were taken to 'Grandma Pollards' a fish and chip and bakery emporium from another world. Wonderful, even the present day descendants of mistress Pollard were wonderfully courteous and hard working evoking memories of that old fashioned Northern Europe work ethic.

Another fish and chip emporium is in Bury which is now widely publicised for 'its famous market'. We once lived near to Bury. The fish and chip restaurant is Thompsons, now relocated from its original crumbling location opposite the once cinema. Sadly the traditions of fish and chips and good pubs are in decline.

Clearly home thoughts are strange things. Like many things throughout our lives the simplest are perhaps the most lingering: family, friends. Places from the past and as always food and drink. In the nineteen fifties the legacy of the Manchester Corporation Waterworks provided town water from the Lake District of such good quality it was used for topping up lead acid accumulators. The Lake District then was still largely a place for sheep, their traditional farmers and lots of rain. The large Manchester wholesale produce market close to the city centre supplied all things direct and fresh. It is all gone now replaced by apartments and entertainment. The Lake District is often over run with tourists, though it still rains well there.


There are one or two fish and chip outlets here in Brittany but nothing to compare with the real thing.

Pubs: perhaps some expatriate with a healthy pension might consider investing in a 'micro brewery' of the style of those which successfully sprang up in USA some years ago. The trouble with this notion is who has a healthy pension?

One of the great dangers in these reflective muses of course is that much of what we remember has long since vanished. Quite often the memory is all that is left to cherish. Even people turn out to be not what we remember.

A final thought; one of the many Manchester institutions is Chetham's School of Music which resonates all the way back through Manchester's collegiate past. Chets is presently in the process of a major modernisation and expansion programme despite everything; eck!





REPORT ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF PROBUS FRANCE 9 DECEMBER 2011 IN LE TOUQUET

PREAMBLE

Most Annual General Meetings are dull affairs except when shareholders have a bone to pick with the Board of a publicly quoted company.

The AGM of Probus France is quite different. Apart from the usual administrative matters which have to be dealt with, such as the election of the committee for the ensuing year, the Probus France AGM is much more of a social gathering providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences. On two previous occasions in 2009 and 2010 when I attended the meetings in Marcq en Baroeul in the Lille conurbation, the highlight of the day was a presentation by an eminent politician or "*homme d'affaires*" on a matter of topical interest. This followed a copious lunch "*bien arrosé*", and so the speaker had to be particularly lively in order to overcome a certain post-prandial lassitude.

LE TOUQUET

This foregathering was quite a different kettle of fish, both in the programme of events, its elegant venue, and for the first time, the presence of ladies. Why was this a special occasion? Because it marked the founding of the first Probus club in France twenty years before, and thus the precursor of the present network of some 37 clubs spread across France from north to south and from east to west. The President and committee of the Le Touquet club wished to mark the occasion in a special way and so the Bureau National de Liaison felt that an appropriate way of doing this would be to hold the AGM in that most elegant of early 20th century towns with its racecourse, golf courses, casino and many more attractions.

The 150 or so members met in the Palais des Congrès in the late afternoon. The meeting was presided by Maurice Tacquet whom many of our members will remember from our charter ceremony. Maurice gave a comprehensive report on the "State of the Union", covering all aspects of the clubs' activities and called upon certain members to address the meeting.

Having already on the two previous occasions reported to the assembly on the nature, history and raison d'être of our club, I had indicated to Maurice some weeks before the AGM that I felt that a further presentation by the Pontivy club could smack of favouritism, but shortly before the due date, he sent me a three line whip stating that he "insisted" that I address the gathering specifically on the initiative in drawing together the two French-speaking clubs, and the two English-speaking ones, ourselves from Brittany also and the Jersey club.

I explained how this "historic" encounter came about, largely through the initiative of our present President and followed up by the president of Dinard and myself. Members at the AGM were most intrigued by the possible linguistic problems and (yet again!) why we were an English club deep in the heart of Morbihan. So I went yet again through my dog and pony show to the seeming satisfaction of the French lot!

We seem to have a high profile in the French organization. Numerous members from all over the country sought to speak to me on the general topic of integration and our view of the French political situation. Hot potatoes indeed!

After the meeting, we were joined by the ladies and after the ritual champagne à gogo, sat down to a sumptuous dinner, immaculately served simultaneously to the 280 guests. Quite a feat! Interestingly, present as guests of the Le Touquet club were a delegation from their twin club of Tunbridge Wells, and twelve guests from Canterbury which is twinned with the town of Le Touquet. My wife Barbara had the opportunity of renewing her acquaintanceship with Maurice Tacquet and past president Michel Binauld, not forgetting our old friend Bernard Thiriez.

All in all, it was a very pleasant and fruitful occasion, and one which will further enhance the reputation of the *rosbifs* from

Tony Dyson

ANECDOTES DE MONSIEUR CHECHEUR

Too old to be told

The proposal by the Royal College of Psychiatrists that over-65's should be screened for alcohol abuse evoked some interesting responses recently. The following were some that particularly appealed:

- I'm looking forward to a drunken old age . Now some meddler wants to spoil my dream.
- I propose we establish a National College of Common Sense to screen all members of the RCP and every other self righteous lecturing body for the idiot gene
- Last time I was in a town centre on a Saturday night I don't recall seeing 75-year olds tottering drunk and half naked on their stilettos. How things must have changed !
- Life's journey is not to arrive at the gate safely I a well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, totally worn out, shouting; "What a ride !"

Tennis Extraordinaire

Whilst Wimbledon is long past but the extraordinary coincidence this year which drew John Isner of the USA against the Frenchman Nicolas Mahut still sticks in my mind. For those of you who are not tennis aficionados I must tell you that these two players had met at Wimbledon the previous year. They were well matched and after almost three hours play the score stood at 4-6, 6-3, 7-6, 6-7. To clinch the match either player only had to reach 6 games with a 2 game advantage or attain a lead of 2 games after passing 6. But the tenacity of both players was such that this proved beyond them for the next eight hours and eleven minutes until Isner finally won by 70-68. At 11 hours and 5 minutes this was by far the longest match ever

played at Wimbledon or I believe any other major championship. The odds of them being drawn together again this year must have been extremely long but it happened, It would of course be unthinkable that the draw could have been manipulated !

An Independent Man

I loved the quotes attributed to Lord Marsh who left us recently who loved to puncture egos and said of Wilson's cabinet "I have never worked among a group of people who disliked and distrusted each other as much" whilst letting it be known that Wilson's office was "very simply furnished – just a throne and a prayer mat"

A Stinging Response

Although V S Naipaul the auth or is generally regarded as a writer who has produced works of the highest quality his pronouncements are often controversial and reflect a huge ego. Thus it was satisfying to see that when he came out with a withering criticism of female writers that a lady critic came back with this quote from George Eliot Blessed is the man, who having nothing to say, abstains from giving wordy evidence of the fact"

Mothermorphism

A correspondence recently developed regarding the signs of a woman developing into her mothers image. One respondent suggested that it was "When I opened the paper one morning and went straight to the death announcements" Personally I preferred the response " A woman becomes like her mother when she says to her husband "No I don't want another drink – and nor do you"

GRANDPARENTS' ANSWERING MACHINE

Good morning . . . At present we are not at home, but please Leave your message after you hear the beep.

Beeeeppp

If you are one of our children, dial 1 and then select the option from 1 to 5, in order of "birth arrival" so we know who it is.

If you need us to stay with the children, press 2

If you want to borrow the car, press 3

If you want us to wash your clothes and do ironing, press 4

If you want the grandchildren to sleep here tonight, press 5

If you want us to pick up the kids at school, press 6

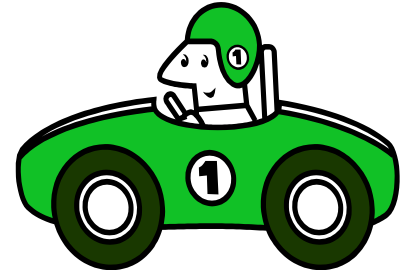
If you want us to prepare a meal for Sunday or to have it delivered to your home, press 7

If you want to come to eat here, press 8

If you need money, press 9

If you are going to invite us to dinner, or, taking us to the theatre, start talking—we are listening!"

ROADWATCH



Drivers caught talking on their mobile phones in 2011 faced a 35 euro fine and two points off their licence. In 2012, they'll be slapped with a 135 euro fine and lose three points. Also under the new road laws, drivers caught watching movies while driving will be forced to cough up a massive 1,500 euros as opposed to the former 135 euro charge. The movie device will also be seized!

Driving on the highway-side strip is now considered a crime and, if breached, will be accompanied with a 135 euro fine.

Every car in France, from Spring 2012, will be required by law to carry disposable breathalysers, giving drivers an

easy option of checking whether they are under the legal limit. Police can issue a 17 euro fine if a breathalyser test kit is not in the vehicle. The reading must be at 0.05.

Rumour has it that speed camera warning devices i.e. on your SatNav etc are banned. In theory using a device that warns of cameras will be punishable with a €1,500 fine and the loss of six points. You should therefore "not activate this option" on your equipment. *It is not clear how this will be enforced.*



"This One Looks Comfy!"
Cleo, the Davenport's Braque/Labrador at a Bike Rally

JANUARY 2012

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The Next Edition of
La Plume de Probus Pontivy
will be published
16 April 2012

Please forward your articles
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Ties, Tie Pins & Stick Pins
are available to purchase at
the Monthly ProBus Meetings

FUTURE PRESENTATIONS

February 14

Jim Glancy "Life in Zambia &
Malawi 1969-1989"

March 13

Jan Thomée (& Ilse Baldock)
"Homeopathy"

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