

La Plume de Probus Pontivy



The official Newsletter

Of the Probus Club de Pontivy

September 2011



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

After a wonderfully warm and sunny early spring, we seem to have been in the doldrums during the whole of late spring and most of the summer. I am speaking about the weather in our part of Brittany, of course, but a similar comment could also be applied to certain aspects of our club. Although there have been scintillating moments, notably Paul Duke's master class which demonstrated wondrous skills of magic and sleight-of-hand, and the relaxed and highly informative open meeting held in July, we have been bedevilled by resignations mainly on the grounds of ill-health. I suppose that, taking the morose and pessimistic view, it is only to be expected that such problems would be endemic among a membership of retired persons of a certain age, but we must not let such considerations redound to the detriment of our vibrant dynamism!! So say I, an almost perfect example of an innate depressive mindset! I even find myself uttering mediaeval imprecations such as "The fiend is muckle, the wind is slee, timor mortis conturbat me!" But enough of the metaphysics already!

Joking apart, the problem of membership "wastage" and recruitment is ever present. We are very sorry indeed that Richard and Margarethe England have left the area to return to the UK (for family reasons), and that Gordon Rayfield, for health reasons, has found it necessary to resign, and with him, Suzanne, naturally enough. We owe them all our thanks for their contribution through their presence and their presentations, to the success of our club, as we do to Rita and Bryan Price who are about to leave us to take up residence again in Devon.

Ill health has curtailed the multifarious activities of our indefatigable Secretary, Val, who as a result has come to the ineluctable conclusion that she must resign her position with effect from the Annual General Meeting next October. In the meantime she will valiantly continue her work and will also guide Chris and Penny Evers as they prepare to take over as joint Secretaries. How lucky and grateful we are that they have consented to fill this onerous and time-consuming (and sometimes thankless) task.

It has been a pleasure to welcome back Jan Thomée within our ranks who no longer has to face the daunting prospect of climbing the stairs at L'Aiglou. The Robic has proved to be far more convenient as well as being more congenial... and the food is better! His fellow Dutchman, Eduard de Vin, has also become a valued member since our last Newsletter, and in addition we have a number of potential postulants – but we are not a closed Order- who will shortly confirm their interest in becoming members; and indeed while writing this, I can confirm that David and Judy Jones have now signed on the dotted line.

In general terms, the club is moving towards a more collaborative phase whereby members will be encouraged to put forward their views on any subject touching the conduct and functioning of our affairs, to propose interesting projects for us all to examine, and to contribute more actively to the Newsletter. In this way, we hope to be more inclusive, whatever that may mean. I don't understand half of what trendy people say these days!

I will represent our club at the AGM of the French Probus organisation which will take place in Le Touquet this year to commemorate the founding of the first French club there twenty five years ago. This will be the last official function of my presidency which finishes at the end of the year, when I will hand over the flaming torch to my successor. ...with my very best wishes!

Tony Dyson

UN MOT DU PRESIDENT

Bien que le Probus Club de Pontivy soit un membre intégral du réseau des clubs de Probus France, il n'en reste pas moins vrai qu'il se diffère des autres clubs français par le fait qu'il est anglophone, et que le club lui-même se compose d'expatriés et expatriées d'expression anglaise, ou tout au moins bilingues, comme par exemple nos membres néerlandais. La langue véhiculaire au sein de notre club est l'anglais, mais tenant compte de cela, l'adhésion de membres d'autres nationalités est non seulement la bienvenue mais aussi vivement encouragée.

La particularité de Probus Pontivy est sans aucun doute la circonscription très étendue où on pêche nos nouveaux membres, le corollaire de cela étant la nature un tant soit peu introspective de notre bulletin trimestriel qui sert en quelque sorte de forum de nouvelles domestiques. Voilà pourquoi notre éditorial anglais, dans cette édition, étale les va-et-vients de nos membres à un point critique de l'existence du club, car il s'agit du problème sempiternel de recrutement.

Cette cuisine intérieure n'intéresse guère nos collègues français, même si pour nous elle se trouve au cœur de nos préoccupations. Mais soyons optimistes car il y a des changements en perspective, notamment dans la façon dont nos réunions seront dorénavant configurées ayant par exemple une participation plus compréhensive voire plus active de la part de nos membres. Sur le plan de recrutement, bien que nous ayons reçu la démission de quelques membres surtout pour des raisons de santé, il y a tout lieu de croire que nous en attirons d'autres. Si tous ceux qui en ont exprimé un vif intérêt de devenir membre confirment cet intérêt, nous nous en réjouissons. Vivement cela donc !

Par la même occasion, nous continuons de poursuivre notre idéal qui est de serrer les liens entre les clubs bretons eux-mêmes, et avec les clubs anglophones limitrophes tels que Jersey et Guernesey. Nous repartirons à l'attaque après la rentrée !

Tony Dyson

SOME COLLECTED THOUGHTS FROM BRYAN PRICE

I'm the life of the party—even if it lasts until 8 pm.

I'm very good at opening childproof caps—with a hammer.

I'm smiling all the time because I can't hear a word you are saying.

I'm very good at telling stories - over and over again.

I'm beginning to realise that ageing is not for whimps.

I'm sure they are making adults much younger these days , and when did they let kids become policemen?

I'm a walking storeroom of facts - I've just lost the storeroom door key.

Yes I'm a SENIOR CITIZEN and I think I'm having the time of my life !

The Somme Battlefields

Having negotiated the motorways and over-populated areas of the UK, and crossed the channel to La Belle France by whatever means to Calais, a 125 km drive south down the A26 will bring you to the heart of the **Battlefields of the Somme**. It is a diversion well worth making to bring to life the horrors of the days in July 1916 when so many thousands of men lost their lives. We decided to spend two days in the area, travelling from place to place at our own pace rather than joining an organised tour, of which there are many. We started our visit at **Thiepval**, at the northern end of the British front line, and where now stands the Sir Edwin Lutyens designed memorial arch, 45 metres high, and visible for miles around. It commemorates the 73,367 British and South African men who fell between July 1915 and March 1918 and who have no known grave. Their names are engraved on the 16 pillars of the memorial arch which bears the inscription "To the French and British armies, from the grateful British Empire". The battle at Thiepval lasted from July to September 1916, and symbolically 300 British and 300 French unknown soldiers are buried at the site. There is a small visitor centre with a shop and information centre. It was a sobering beginning to our visit of the area.

The town of **Albert** has a rich historical past, and although initially occupied by the Germans in 1914, was evacuated after the Battle of the Marne, and in July 1915 the British relieved the French units when it became a centre of much military activity particularly during the Battle of the Somme – offices, hospitals, billets, supplies etc. The golden statue of the Virgin on the top of the Basilica was hit by a German shell in January 1915, and hung horizontally until 1918 when it fell. The Germans briefly recaptured the town in 1918, but after the final recovery by the British in the August, the town was in total ruin. Like so many other towns in the area that suffered the same fate, the architecture reflects the Art Deco style of the 1920s and 30s, rebuilt with the aid of the City of Birmingham.

The **Basilica de Notre Dame de Brebières**, rebuilt with the aid of the son and grandson of the original architect, houses in its underground passageways, the **Somme 1916 Museum**. Alcoves show life in the trenches, displaying objects, weapons and documents found in the fields, with sound and lighting effects giving realistic impressions of the horrors experienced. The passageways were used as air raid shelters during WWII.

At **La Boisselle**, 4 km north east of Albert, the **Lochnagar Crater** is the only crater open to the public. Underground tunnels were dug under the German lines by miners specially recruited from Tyneside, resulting in several explosions blasting out half an hour before the infantry assault at 7.30 a.m. on July 1st 1916. They were designed to break the German front line, without success. This crater measuring 100 metres in diameter and 30 metres deep is now owned and preserved by an Englishman. An annual service commemorates the event.

To the north west, the **Beaumont-Hamel** commune covers villages immediately behind the German lines. The volunteer army of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment left their trenches at 7.30 a.m. and half an hour later only 68 men remained unscathed, with all officers wounded or killed, 700 men having fallen. The field of battle is still visible, with trenches remaining and lined with duckboard so that visitors can walk along them. The statue of a Caribou dominates the park, with memorials and cemeteries to other regiments involved in that area of the battle.

On July 1st 58,000 men fell, including 20,000 killed. Thirty two battalions of 800 men lost more than 500 men each. Torrential rain turned the whole battlefield into a "foul brown mush, swallowing everything" trapping men, animals and weapons. The British advance after four and a half months was approximately 12 km, and between 5 km and 8 km for the less numerous French. Of around 3 million men in the line, 1.2 million were killed, wounded or missing – men from France, Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, South Africa, Australia and India. We stayed at the **Hotel de la Paix in Albert**, which was a very typical small downtown hotel, with a good dining room and a friendly reception.

We want to return, to visit other areas of this now peaceful rolling countryside. We should also like to visit the museum in **Peronne** which we believe is more substantial than that in Albert. The Circuit of Remembrance is marked by signposts displaying a poppy – and symbolically there were poppies flowering in the fields during our visit. On a personal note, we were keen to visit the area, as Penny's grandfather rode a horse through the Battle, and he and his three brothers miraculously survived both wars, to live to old age.

Chris & Penny Evers



THE TRENCHES TODAY



THE BASILICA DE NOTRE DAME IN ALBERT



THE CRATER OF LOCHNAGAR

My thanks to Bryan Price for the following poem. Ed

When an old man died in the geriatric ward of a small hospital in Tampa Florida, it was believed that he had nothing left of value. Later when the nurses were going through his meagre possessions, they found this poem :-

CRABBY OLD MAN

*What do you see nurses ?.... What do you see ?
What are you thinking When you're looking at me ?
A crabby old man.... Not very wise.
Uncertain of habit with faraway eyes ?*

*Who dribbles his food And makes no reply.
When you say in a loud voice "I do wish you'd try !"
Who seems not to notice.... the things that you do.
And forever is losing..... A sock or a shoe.*

*Who resisting or not Lets you do as you will
With bathing and feeding The long day to fill ?
Is that what you're thinking ? Is that what you see ?
Then open your eyes, nurse You're not looking at me.*

*I'll tell you who I am As I sit here so still.
As I do at your bidding As I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of ten With a father and mother.
Brothers and sisters Who love one another.*

*A young boy of sixteen With wings on his feet.
Dreaming that now A lover he'll meet.
A groom soon at twenty My heart gives a leap.
Remembering, the vows That I promised to keep.*

*At twenty five, now I have young of my own.
Who need me to guide And a secure happy home.
A man of thirty My young now grown fast,
Bound to each other With ties that should last.*

*At forty, my young sons Have grown and have gone,
But my womans beside me To see I don't mourn.
At fifty , once more Babies play round my knee,
Again we know children My loved one and me.*

*Dark days are upon me My wife is now dead.
I look at the future I shudder with dread.
For my young are all rearing Young of their own.
And I think of the years And the love I have known.*

Continued :-

*I'm now an old man And nature is cruel.
Tis jest to make old age Look like a fool.
The body, it crumbles Grace and vigor, depart.
There is now a stone Where once was my heart.*

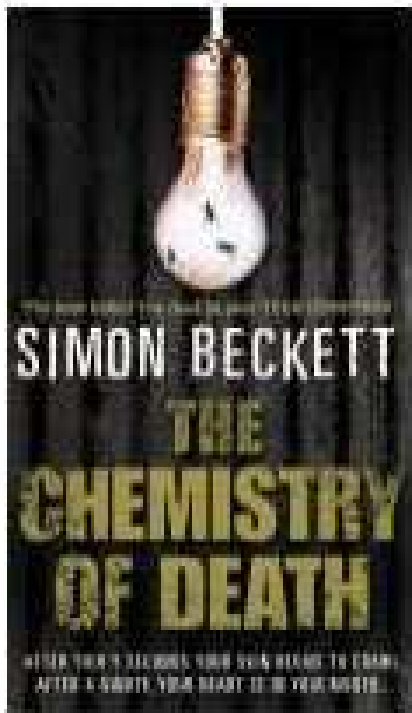
*But inside this old carcass A young guy still dwells,
And now and again My battered heart swells
I remember the joys I remember the pain.
And I'm loving and living Life over again.*

*I think of the years all too few Gone too fast.
And accept the stark fact That nothing can last.
So open your eyes, people Open and see..
Not a crabby old man. Look closer See ME !!*

"IF THE CAP FITS !"

The Committee

**Oh give me your pity, I'm on a committee
Which means from morning till night
We attend and amend and contend and defend
Without a conclusion in sight
We confer and concur, we defer and demur
And reiterate all of our thought
We revise the agenda with frequent addenda
And consider a load of reports
We compose and propose, we suppose and oppose
And points of procedure we shun
But though various notions are brought up as mo-
tions
There's terribly little gets done
We resolve and absolve, but never dissolve
Since it is out of the question for us
What a shattering pity to end our committee
Where else would we make such a fuss???**



This is a new author for me , but I enjoyed him so much I bought another two by the same writer. One of the best thrillers I have read in a long time, once I started reading it I couldn't put it down.

Maggots beetles and grave wax are bread and butter to a very distinctive kind of detective in Simon Beckett's fifth novel. Fluent in the language of decomposition, Hunter can read in a rotting body signs that will determine crucial factors such as time since death.

A former British Forensic Expert , Dr David Hunter decides to give up his career when a tragedy hits him, hr loses his wife and daughter in a car crash. He applies and succeeds in getting a post as a GP in a little town in Norfolk and he hopes to leave the past behind.

After three years, he's more or less settled in, (even if still viewed by the locals as an outsider) when two youg boys find a woman's decomposing body on local land, and his life is turned on it's head.

When the local police—struggling with a case in which they seem distinctly out of

their depth - find out that Hunter used to be one of the country's leading forensic anthropologists, they try to draft him in. At first Hunter is unwilling to be snagged back into reminders of his old life, but gradually he submits to lend his help. And then another local woman goes missing. Is there a serial killer at large? Who is it ? You will have to read right through to the end before you know, and by then you will have chosen and rejected at least three of the locals.

Reviewed by Val Davenport

A little boy goes to his father and asks 'Daddy, how was I born?'

The father Answers,
'Well, son, I guess one day you will need to find out anyway!

Your Mom and I first got together in a chat room on Yahoo.

Then I Set up a date via e-mail with your Mom and we met at a cyber-cafe..

We Sneaked into a secluded room, and googled each other.

There your mother Agreed to a download from my hard drive.

As soon as I was ready to upload,

We discovered that neither one of us had used a firewall, and since it was too Late to hit the delete button,

Nine months later a little Pop-Up appeared that Said:

...

..

.

You got Male !

WE TOOK THE HIGH ROAD

By "Steameagle"

It was back in January 2005 that the dates for the third biannual Portway aviation syndicate "Haggis Bash" were decided. John the syndicate leader, who chose them really must have given his crystal ball a good polish; as on previous occasions, he chose the best weather for weeks.

On the Thursday morning four of us turned up. The Bash was open to anyone in the syndicate or indeed anyone else with an aircraft who wanted to participate. Legs are flown on an alternate basis and aircraft and partners were swapped each day. Being a democratic organisation everyone had a say in the planning. The planning consisted of sitting around a table eating bacon butties, in the cafeteria chewing the air for an hour suggesting possible places to go and the routes to be flown. On this occasion it was reasonably fast and all agreed on Carlisle as the first refuelling stop before launching ourselves across the border onto the unsuspecting Scots. The timing was also right as a stopping place for lunch.



The AA5B and the TB10 were to be the weapons of choice. The TB10 was the most comfortable whilst the AA5B was possibly the most fun to fly and just a little faster. We took off within five minutes of each other and headed north towards Wallasey, a radio beacon on the coast west of Liverpool, then north along the coast past Blackpool to the fishing port of Fleetwood. From there on over the Lake district to Deans Cross radio beacon before turning northeast to Carlisle. Cloud base was not a problem and the two aircraft progressed north with the visibility improving. The time could be spent sight-seeing over the magnificent scenery of the Lake district. The flights of course are VFR (visual Flight Rules) and navigation was by way of a mixture of map reading radio aids and needless to say GPS's. The latter being relied on too much by certain parties. One would think that with only two aircraft two sets and a spare would suffice; not in this case, there seven between the two aircraft. It should be noted that not all were in use at any one time.

Over a not very inspiring lunch it was decided to fly direct to Benbecula; refuel and go on to Stornaway and then back to Glenforsa on the isle of Mull for the night. The syndicates one and only life raft was out on loan so there were only life jackets. The route was therefore planned from headland to headland to minimise the time over water. The longest over water leg turned out to be 34 nm (about 15 minutes) not bad when you look at a map. Before leaving Shobdon rooms had been booked at the Glenforsa Hotel.

The weather was improving all the time and as we headed north west the scenery became breathtaking. We flew round Holy island, not a lot there considering it's auspicious name. From there up Loch Fyne and over the firth of Lorn to the isle of Mull. We flew over the airfield at Glenforsa and gave them a call but no answer. Not unusual as they only man the radio in the hotel when they are expecting traffic. From there on to the isles of Eigg and Rum then to the tip of the isle of Skye before the short sea crossing to Benbecula. After refuelling we were pleased to be off to Stornaway; neither of these islands are particularly inviting being mostly bare low lying rock left by the glaciers of the ice age.

There is a large military danger area over the isle of Skye, on the direct route from Stornaway to Glenforsa. Base is 750ft with the top at 5000ft. One crew decided to use the low level route and the other went over the top. The low level route at 500ft was spectacular flying down the sound of Raasay between Skye and Raasay and then over the airport at Skye and then due south to Glenforsa.

The airport is right on the edge of the water, smooth grass but inclined towards the water and only 792 metres long with a hill close to the SW end. The hotel is a log cabin and very comfortable, the hosts, Brendan and Allison Walsh, are aviation nuts. They came from down south at North Weald and have a beautifully restored Piper Cub which lives out in the open.

Dawn broke to another lovely day, Friday the 13th! After a breakfast conference which finalised the routings and it was also decided that it would be a GPS free day, only old fashioned aids could be used. Then it was off to Oban to re acquaint ourselves with Paul Keegan the airport manager and general factotum, a real character. Refuelling ourselves from Paul's coffee swindle and the aircraft from the bowser, it was off to Inverness via the Great Glen a total of 78 miles at 1000ft between the mountains some of which still had snow on them. For those who have not done this trip it must be one of the worlds great flights the scenery is breath taking.

After refuelling and getting an update on the weather the route took us north east to Wick for lunch and then onto Kirkwall. After passing the Pentland Firth we flew very close to the "Old Man of Hoy" for a photo opportunity and then over the entrance to Scapa Flow and on to an old war time airfield curiously called Twatt, before landing in Kirkwall for another night stop. Here we hired a car having got a hotel in Stromness about 12 miles from the airport. Another evening with good food and company and more than a modicum of the local brew saw us prepared for the return journey south. Before we set off we toured the island skirting Scapa flow and passing the airfield at Twatt. Only a few of the buildings are now left, including the very distinctive and typical wartime control tower, all now sadly neglected.

It had been decided at the breakfast conference to fly direct to Oban down the Great Glen by passing Wick and Inverness, GPS was today optional. From Oban we would go onto Fife. The flight was without incident and the flight south west bound down the glen was as inspiring as it had been the day before. On arrival at Oban we found it packed. A lot of aircraft had been to Barra (as the tides were right) and were washing off their aircraft. The flight to Fife was only 75nm and we arrived before 1900hrs in time for a beer before going off to a pre booked guest house in nearby Portmoak.

The breakfast conference did not come to any decision. In fact the arguments for a lunch time stopping place continued until take off. I think we were all reluctant to admit that our journey was coming to an end. One aircraft took as straight a line as possible to Sleep near Shrewsbury, a routing that included the low level light aircraft corridor past Manchester. The other went via the coast and Wallasey. In the event the low level route was uneventful and we saw no other aircraft until we arrived at Sleep who were very busy. So much so that they had run out of most of the advertised lunchtime menu food.

We arrived back at Shobdon in the middle of the afternoon when the open day was in full swing and indeed from the air it looked as if it would not be possible to get any more aircraft on the airfield. Flying time including all the sight seeing was about twelve and a half hours, it seemed much more as we had covered so much ground in the four days. Roll on the next venture.

Golfer "Think I'm going to drown myself in the lake."
Caddy "Think you can keep your head down that long?"

Golfer "I'd move heaven and earth to break 100 on this course."
Caddy "Try heaven, you've already moved most of the earth."

BUREAU NATIONAL DE LIAISON

The AGM of the BUREAU NATIONAL DE LIAISON took place in Villeneuve d'Ascq on December 10th 2010.

28 clubs of the total present number of 33 were represented by approx. 150 delegates. Our club was represented by Tony Dyson, our President.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SALIENT POINTS ARISING WHICH AFFECT OUR CLUB.

FUSION OF TWO MEETINGS

In future there be no special meeting of Presidents already elected for the ensuing year, in advance of the Annual General Meeting. Instead, Presidents-elect will meet one hour before the start of the AGM to discuss the duties and responsibilities of a President, procedures and any issues they feel should be aired.

This formula was successfully adopted for this year's meeting, and will therefore become the format for the future

IT WAS PROPOSED that the election/re-election of club officers should take place three months in advance of the AGM so that computer records can be adjusted by the BNL well before the Assemblée Générale.

(NOTA BENE: This would be very difficult for our club because it would imply holding two General Meetings, the first of which to elect officers for the following year, and the second to pursue the Agenda and officially hand over responsibilities to the new management. Since we cannot do this, we must ensure that the election results deriving from our own AGM are communicated without delay to "Head Office".

3; Our efforts to integrate more fully with the French organisation were noted with approval and the BNL encourage us to continue in this way.

After the AGM, our President had the opportunity of discussing this particular aspect with the Secretary of the Probus ARMOR Club of Dinard, who was very keen on setting up a meeting with the third Breton club, Emeraude of Saint Malo, for tripartite discussions on matters of mutual co-operation; and later to

bring in the Jersey and Guernsey clubs to form a sort of Western France alliance. It was agreed that we would contact him with a view to arranging a meeting

Finally, it is amusing to note that our being the only "British" club in France, we are the object of great interest and curiosity on the part of the French members? particularly after your President's second presentation of our club. It was rather like being a caged animal at the zoo!!

A.W.D.