



Pro-Biz



Website - www.probus-teddington-hampton.org.uk

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VISIT TO THE POPPY FACTORY, RICHMOND, TUESDAY 25th MARCH 2024



The Poppy Factory was founded in 1922 with the backing of Earl Haig and a financial contribution from the British Legion, with the objective of providing employment for wounded veterans of the First World War. It has been based in Richmond since 1926, on a substantial site (a former brewery) near the river which includes the factory and warehouse, a Visitor Centre, and commercial and residential space which the charity rents out.

About twenty-five Probus members and partners met at the Visitor Centre, expertly corralled by Brian Brignall. We watched a nine-minute film of the history and current activities of the charity, which was followed by a forty-minute talk given by one of the charity's volunteers. These explained the adoption of the poppy (as described in Lt. Col. McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields") for fundraising and the provision of employment via the sale of (originally silk) poppies, and the chance overhearing by the charity's founder, George Howson MC, of Earl Haig's approval of the idea of setting up a poppy factory. They also covered the current activities of the charity, which focus on the creation of wreaths (with individual poppies produced elsewhere), organising the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey each year, and providing employability and employment advice and mentoring to veterans, under the Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen. These were followed by an inspection of displays of charity objects and photographs (old and recent), and the opportunity to try one's hand at making a wreath, with the factory visible from inside the Visitor Centre. Overall, this was an interesting, enjoyable and thought-provoking outing.

LUNCH TALK ON "THE GREAT AIRCRAFT FACTORY" by DAVID HASSARD

David Hassard gave us a history of Kingston's role as a military aircraft manufacturing centre from 1912. Sopwith biplane fighters were assembled in central Kingston during WW1, notably the Camel. The large factory near the Thames in Ham opened in WW1. That factory switched to refurbishment of trucks and production of "Trojan" cars during the interwar years. During WW2 Kingston-based R&D was crucial for the continuing development of the Hawker Hurricane. After WW2 work at the large factory led to production of the Harrier jump jet. It closed in 1993. It's now a housing estate.



WALK AND LUNCH, THE CARPENTERS ARMS, LIMPSFIELD CHART, TUESDAY 2nd APRIL



The number of walkers for the April pub lunch and walk fell dramatically from the numbers of previous months, due in part to the walk location and the Easter holiday. Phil McHardy, Ian and Vera Macrae, Margaret MacArthur, Hilary Hart and Mike Fraser made up the six Probus plodders who met at The Carpenters Arms, Limpsfield Chart on the Kent/Surrey border on what was a fairly warm but cloudy day. The walk was of three miles primarily through a woodland area known as High Chart and followed what turned out to be a very wet and muddy terrain. The six walkers set off into the woods spending a lot of effort avoiding deep water filled paths. After about half an hour into the walk those at the front realised that Margaret and Vera had gone missing. Hilary and Ian retraced their steps and after a short search managed to locate them as they had taken a different route. Once all back together, the six of us were faced with some pretty tough and steep walking conditions having to cross and follow some very wet and rain sodden fields and paths, and after what was a very steep and long climb towards the end, we emerged from the woods onto Limpsfield cricket green and a short walk back to the pub. Everyone seemed to enjoy the challenge the walk provided but we were glad to finish it.

At the pub we were joined by Ann Fraser and Martin Hart where we all enjoyed what turned out to be some of the best pub meals any of us had had in a very long time and with just the eight of us around the table it was very intimate.



FUTURE EVENTS

TUESDAY 7th MAY:

Walk/Pub Lunch, Venue TBC

Organiser: Ian Macrae

TUESDAY 21st MAY

Club Luncheon, Speaker: John Nicholson: "Molecules and Murder"