



Pro-Biz



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Britain's First Oil Ashore - *Oil Man's Odyssey*

Odyssey is defined as an *eventful long journey*; and that's the way it turned out for our February speaker in his challenging quest to help bring the **First Oil Ashore** ... none other than our very own **Keith McArthur**, Chairman-Elect, Probus Plodders supremo and petro-chemical designer by profession.

Welcomed by Chairman Hywel Thomas at the Club's February Luncheon, Keith delivered a graphic account of the complexities entailed in developing the first oil production field in the northern section of the North Sea - the Argyle Field - which came on-stream in June 1975 under the aegis of two American oil magnates, the Hamilton brothers. They were locked in a neck-and-neck race with the British company BP who were developing the Forties Field. The Hamiltons took the revolutionary high-risk decision to change the original steel jacket design concept half way through the project so as to develop the field from a floating platform anchored in the centre, with the oil wells connected to it via a series of pipes and manifolds. Keith was seconded from the London design office to Aberdeen to help with the sub-sea connections to the wells which involved the British, American and French companies (the French providing the diving expertise).

Keith explained that from there on in, solutions were found to a string of technical and man-made problems by the American 'can do' ethos allied to help and advice from the British engineers.

Keith was further involved in the conversion of the floating platform (semi-submersible) from a drilling rig to a production platform. After numerous trials and tribulations, success was finally achieved and the oil was landed from a tanker to the Isle of Grain Refinery in Kent on 11th June 1975 - three months ahead of BP. The valve was turned jointly by Fred Hamilton and Tony Benn who had been appointed Energy Secretary just two days prior!

In proposing the vote of thanks, John Shelton, himself a chemical engineer, paid tribute to the ingenuity, endeavour and courage shown by Keith and everyone concerned with the project. Members tipped their (metaphorical) hard hats in salute.

(Keith McArthur / Jim Woodford)



NEW MEMBERS

We were pleased to welcome three members at the February luncheon.

They were:

Peter Cave, a mostly retired Mechanical Engineer who lives on Taggs Island:

Brian Brignall, a retired Bank Manager who lives in Hampton, and

Brian Leggett, a retired Consulting Engineer who also, lives in Hampton.

Welcome to the Club and we hope you all enjoy your membership of Teddington and Hampton Probus.

Dinner at Imber Court

The Club Dinner is being held on Friday 31st March. Our guest speaker will be Brian Greenan, Past President of the Society of London Toastmasters. The evening promises to be very entertaining, as Brian has for several years been a guest speaker on many cruise liners as well as officiating at many distinguished and celebrity events.

WALK FROM THE GEORGE, WRAYSBURY, 7th MARCH

I am all for equality, and all that tosh, but I'm blown if I am going to have a dog steal my thunder when it comes to these reports. Every dog has his day and that certainly applies to Finn; thanks very much Finn but you are now relegated. So here is a proper report for a change. Twelve walkers set off from Wraysbury village in bright sunshine, with daffs poking up all over the place and blossom on the trees. We went straight through St. Andrews churchyard on to the National Trust lands beyond, which took us down to the river Thames opposite Runnymede. Now, Runnymede states its claim to the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, but the whole area seems to make many claims to that piece of history, including Magna Carta island, Ankerwyke Priory, and many other locations. We were informed by Denzil that the standard schoolboy answer to this question was, in fact, that it was signed on the dotted line at the bottom of the parchment. On arriving at the river Finn decided, instead of lapping up the odd puddle, he would have a go at draining the river itself, though it didn't seem to make any difference to the level. We entered the garden which contains the Priory ruins and a 2000 year old Yew tree and met a whole gang of National Trust volunteers who were there to maintain the fences. Not a lot of maintenance seemed to be going on, but there was plenty of tea drinking and biscuit eating in evidence. It was then a wide arc through the NT fields back towards Wraysbury. This whole area is very picturesque and almost like parkland, with the Kennedy and RAF memorials in the background. On arriving back at the pub we were met by another 13 diners, and yet again another excellent meal was 'woofed' down. That last statement was a sop to Finn, as this time he was allowed inside. If you are down Wraysbury way, it's worth a look in The George, as at the back they have an outbuilding called The Boxers Barn, which is where our 'Enery and his brother used to train. There are many famous photos, including the one of Cassius Clay on his bottie after receiving a rather vicious left hook from 'Enery.

(Keith McArthur)



Photo:
Keith McArthur

Reminder that next month is the A.G.M. Please do your utmost to attend this important date in the Club's calendar.

FUTURE EVENTS:

Tue 4 April Pub Lunch/Walk – The Sportsman, Mogador, near Reigate - Organiser Keith McArthur

Tue 18 April Club Luncheon – A.G.M.

Sun 23/27 April H.L.P.C. Holiday to North Devon