



Pro-Biz



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Issue No 226 News from Teddington and Hampton Probus

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WHEN IS A WORD-CROSS NOT A WORD-CROSS?

When it's a cross -word (of which more, later): just one of the quirky curios brought to light by our October guest speaker, careerist crossword clue setter and lexicographer **Susan Purcell**. Introduced by Chairman Keith McArthur at the Club's October Luncheon Meeting, Susan regaled us with an absorbing and amusing account of **The History and Compilation of Crosswords**. She reminded us that crosswords have an age-old popularity, examples being found on Greek and Roman archaeological sites, while Queen Victoria herself compiled acrostics for children. The first crossword as we know it was the brainchild in 1913 of Arthur Wynne, Fun Editor of the New York World. It was called 'word-cross', but due to a typographical error came out as 'cross-word', with the hyphen dropped later. In the mid-1920s, triggered by Simon and Schuster, crossword mania swept America. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad put dictionaries aboard its trains and the Pennsylvania Railroad printed crosswords on the back of its menus. Songs and even a Broadway musical were themed around crosswords. One woman refused to help her husband with a clue – and he shot her! Susan then turned her attention to the situation in the UK, where by 1924 crosswords were already featuring in Pearson's Magazine and the Sunday Express. The Times, despite initial reservations, followed suit in 1930, with the original puzzles very similar to today's. The average Times grid has 130 white squares with a possible 24,873 solutions. The GPO opened a Competition Division to handle the stream of entries from crossword competitions, while the London Zoo became fed up with answering competition queries such as 'What is a female kangaroo?' A handful of bright sparks able to solve the Daily Telegraph crossword in under 12 minutes were enlisted to join the cryptography team at Bletchley Park. And MI5 was called upon to investigate the appearance of WW2 top-secret code-words, e.g. Omaha, Mulberry and Overlord in the Telegraph puzzle.



After a lively round of questions, the emphatic endorsement of your Reporter's vote of thanks, showed members' appreciation that word-cross or cross-word, Susan's dissertation had left them thoroughly well clued-up.

(Jim Woodford)

BRIGHTON ROCKED...

...well, maybe very slightly stirred by the descent of a 30-strong Probian contingent marshalled by Hywel Thomas intent on a bracing day out at the legendary watering-place where faded grandeur rubs shoulders with stylish modernity.

A great time was had by all, whether exploring the specialist shops in the Lanes, admiring the Prince Regent's exotic 'pleasure palace', The Royal Pavilion, or sampling the delights of the fare on offer at Brighton's umpteen eateries. We definitely did like to be beside the seaside!

The weather was mostly kind and both outward and return journeys were swift and smooth thanks to our excellent Arena coach driver. Hywel took a deserved bow for his cheery front of house persona, and plaudits were also due to Chris Oprey and Ray Lynch for their valuable input.

(Jim Woodford)

COLIN DAVIES

It is with regret that we have to report that Colin died on Sunday 5 November. His funeral will be held on Wednesday 22 November at 2 pm at St Mary with St Alban Church in Teddington and that afterwards, there will be refreshments in the hall opposite. His widow, Christabel, has asked that people come dressed with a splash of colour.



PUB LUNCH – 5 DECEMBER 2017

Would members please note that the details of the pub lunch for next month have been changed, due to the original venue having suffered a catastrophic fire. The new venue will be at the 'The Jolly Coopers' Hampton. All other details remain the same.

ANOTHER EXCELLENT CONCERT AT THE CADOGAN HALL!

Chris Oprey stage-managed yet another extremely successful return visit to the Cadogan Hall, Sloane Square on Wednesday 1 November with 40 members and guests attending another of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's Concerts. The conductor for the evening was Barry Wordsworth. The concert was entitled 'The Best of British' and featured works by Vaughan Williams, John Ireland and Edward Elgar. In appreciation of the composers, the Cadogan was virtually a sell-out. First piece was The Wasps Overture by Vaughan Williams composed after 1908 for a production at Trinity College, Cambridge of Aristophanes' play 'The Wasps' for which he provided 18 vocal and instrumental numbers. Next was John Ireland's Piano Concerto in E-Flat major, a piece performed by pianist Mark Bebbington which lasted for 30 minutes. After the interval we were treated to 'The Lark Ascending' by Vaughan Williams followed by Elgar's 15 'Enigma Variations'. The winners of CD's were Pat Shepherd and Alicia Williams. Well done and thanks to Chris for once again arranging this fine event.

WALK AROUND WIMBLEDON COMMON – 7th NOVEMBER

It was a bit of a bun fight to get into the car park by the Windmill on Wimbledon Common, but 21 Probus members managed it, such is the lure of going to see The Wombles. We had both Pepper and Finn with us this time with Finn having yet another haircut, so he will have to grow his winter coat pretty swiftly now. There is a suspicion that Eileen is having a new carpet made from his clippings. Setting off from the Windmill, the walkers received their first factoid of the day with the history of Baden Powell writing his famous book, Scouting for Boys, in 1906 while lodging in the Windmill. We proceeded along the



wide tracks of the Common which makes for very sociable trekking, as you can spread 6 people across the path quite easily. After navigating a labyrinth of paths we managed to find the outer edge of the Common, which then made it quite easy for this was our route for the rest of the walk. Passing an apiary with about 8 hives, it was noted that the cost of honey from there worked out at £10 a pound. A little steep perhaps, but we were near Wimbledon Village which most probably results in such a high price. Finn was quite happy with the walk as once we had cleared the car park we didn't see too many other dog walkers. As has been mentioned before, Finn doesn't seem to like other canines very much. Meanwhile, Pepper being a sheep dog, tends to track each side of the walking group as if to corral it and therefore make sure that none of us break away. With the circuit to The Fox and Grapes almost complete, we came across Caesars Camp which sits in the middle of one of the golf courses. You can't see too much of it as it now shrouded by two greens. The walkers quickly made it to the pub to meet a mere 4 diners, instead of our usual 8 or 10. We were joined later by Hywel and Eleanor, making 27 in total for lunch. The Fox and Grapes is a strange pub which looks fairly traditional from the outside but on the inside it is like a converted church hall with a vaulted ceiling, and the bar sits in the middle. The prices, like the honey, are a little steep, but then again we were up by Wimbledon Village. Following lunch, a 20 minute walk took us back to the car park, but crafty Denzil, with Eileen and Finn, sneaked back in Ray's car.

(Keith McArthur)

FUTURE EVENTS:

Tue 5 Dec: Pub Lunch/Walk –The Jolly Coopers, Hampton. Organiser - Keith McArthur

Tue 19 Dec: Club Christmas Luncheon. No Speaker