

**Good news: Spring is already springing.**

Snowdrops have certainly arrived at a garden near you, but you may have your own by now, of course.

It could be caused by climate change, or so-called global warming, but the seasons are certainly changing.

With “twenty-eight days clear”, February is the shortest month of the year and, luckily for several Probus members, 2022 is not a Leap Year !

It used to be called “Fill-dyke February,” mainly because of snow-melt filling all the ditches with water, but we haven’t seen significant snow in these parts for many years. Who wants to buy my old toboggan? It’s the only thing that’s not been going downhill lately.



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**Future of Arundel Probus Club**

On 20th January, the Committee considered a Discussion Paper, prepared by our Vice President, Barry and myself and written to help address increasing concerns about the future of the club. Our membership is continuing to fall, there is poor attendance at meetings (and especially at lunches) and almost zero recruitment. However, club morale remains high and most members have come to accept that Covid is here to stay, but the club’s problems are not all Covid-related.

There is no doubt that the presence of lady guests at recent club meetings has made a valuable difference and at lunch they have helped ensure we have nearer the minimum number the White Swan needs to justify us being there but only 11 members attended lunch in November, plus 5 ladies, including the guest speaker and, at the January lunch once again, there were only 11 members, 5 ladies, a guest, plus the guest speaker - who deserved a much larger audience.

It is difficult to believe the club had around 60 members only ten years ago, and a waiting list. Now, with so few regular members, the decline has to be addressed or the club could fold. Why are we not able to attract new members, have more members stay for lunch or volunteer to speak at meetings? The basic format of club meetings has not changed over time and we still follow broadly the same rules set down in 1980 when the club formed. It’s clearly time for a “root and branch” review of all we do to reverse the trend and that is what the Discussion Paper attempted to do.

The Committee focused on the Paper’s main proposal, that the club admits lady members, just as other Probus clubs have done successfully. As you can imagine, a healthy discussion took place.

After the discussion, four of the six Committee members voted to admit ladies into membership of the club. This now requires the full, paid-up, membership to decide so an EGM will be held at our 24th March meeting.

Meanwhile, President Chris has issued this calling notice. “Gentlemen, due to a serious decline in attendance at our monthly meetings because of a variety of reasons ill health, covid uncertainty etc. there will be no speaker at the March meeting only an EGM to discuss fully and then vote on the proposal that in common with other clubs we should invite Ladies to join The Probus Club of Arundel. Please attend and voice your point of view, postal and email votes will be made to allow for members unable to attend.”

This is the most significant issue in the club’s 42-year history so please be involved, express your points of view and be sure to vote when the time comes, but it is the future of the club that is at stake. Try to put aside any personal preference and only consider the club’s future.

The January committee meeting was followed by the main monthly meeting when our speaker was Dr John Godfrey, DL who told us about his ten years as a Deputy Lieutenant of West Sussex. John is well known in these parts for his knowledge of the history of the County and, in particular, of the First World War and its local impacts. Both featured prominently in John's excellent talk.

John's current focus is on driving the Queens Green Canopy campaign locally which will see many thousands of trees planted nationally to help commemorate Her Majesty's seventy-year reign.

Vice President Barry thanked John for his talk and wished him well for his remaining time as a West Sussex Deputy Lieutenant. John later joined us for lunch and asked that a cheque for his nominal fee of £50 be paid into the Arundel Tree Fund. Thankyou John.



**Too Wet to Woo – Postponement** Our meeting this month on 24th February at the White Swan was to have been a bit different as we planned a demonstration by a troop of live Owls. Alas, the outbreak of Bird Flu has caused the event to be postponed until later in the year, as a precaution.

Brian Arthur has kindly agreed to give his talk on **the Scharnhorst** on 24th February, one month earlier than planned. That has freed-up the 24th March meeting for the important EGM, as detailed above. A Flyer is circulating which tells you more about Brian's talk. This is another Ladies Invitation meeting and we look forward to having many join us.

### Let the Train take the Strain

Did you read the report recently telling us we can now travel by train all the way from London to Singapore? That would be fun. I'm up for it if you'll come with me. It's nearly 6,000 miles, one way, and will take about six weeks, there and back, including time spent in hotels as we await our connections. Think of all the tablets we would need to take with us, plus loads of masks, and sufficient for the return journey too..

That article set me thinking about those "epic" train journeys of the past (and I don't include the years commuting daily to London Bridge). I once travelled from Moscow to Leningrad in winter, with vodka in the carriage and a samovar in the corridor. It was like Doctor Zhivago on rail. Russia in winter is a beautiful place. More recently, the all-day journey from Auckland to Wellington with our NZ family was truly memorable, particularly as being allowed to repeat it anytime soon seems highly unlikely.

Then I reflected on names of stations visited. I recall buying a platform ticket (remember them?) at Llanfairpwllgwyngllgogerychwyrndrobwillantysiliogogoch (where would I be without my search engine to help spelling – another train?!) and I once caught a train from Kievsky station, but I have never used Ford station, just down the road. Must put that on my to-do list. It's less ambitious these days so memories will have to do. Please tell us about your memorable train journeys, anonymously if you prefer.

Still on the subject of travel, I have been in many places but never Kahoots. Apparently you can't go alone as you have to be in Kahoots with someone else. Neither have I been in Cognito where no one recognises you anyway. However, I have been in Sane. They do not have an airport or railway station so you have to be driven there by your partner, children or a friend.

I would like to go to Conclusions but you have to jump there and I am not really up to that these days. I was once in Doubt which is a sad place to go and best avoided. I stood firm in Flexible but my favourite time was in Suspense where the adrenalin was flowing and my old heart was pumping, much-needed at my age. Alas, I am now in Continent so, must go.

Incidentally, I've booked a table for Valentine's Day on 14th February, for me and my wife of course. It's bound to end in tears though - she's hopeless at snooker.

Did you know that the 4th February is National Soup Day - in the USA (where else)? They also have a National Dark Chocolate Day, National Periodic Table Day and National Gumdrop Day – the day before National Toothache Day! Americans have a Day or more for every day of the year, God bless 'em. My favourite is National No-day Day.



**Did you also know? But are the following true?**

In Victorian times ladies wore corsets, laced up in the front. A “proper and dignified” woman wore hers with the laces tied tightly and was referred to as “straight-laced.”

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**In George Washington's days, there were no cameras of course and images were either sculpted or painted. Some paintings of George Washington show him standing behind a desk with one arm behind his back while others show both legs and both arms. Prices charged by painters were based on how many limbs were to be painted as painting them would cost the buyer more. If you wanted two limbs painted it would cost you an arm and a leg.'**

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As incredible as it sounds, men and women once took baths only twice a year (May and October). Women kept their hair covered, while men shaved their heads (because of lice and bugs) and wore wigs. Wealthy men could afford good wigs made from wool. They couldn't wash the wigs, so to clean them they would carve out a loaf of bread, put the wig in the shell, and bake it for 30 minutes. The heat would make the wig big and fluffy, hence the term 'big wig', a term still used today for someone appearing powerful or wealthy.

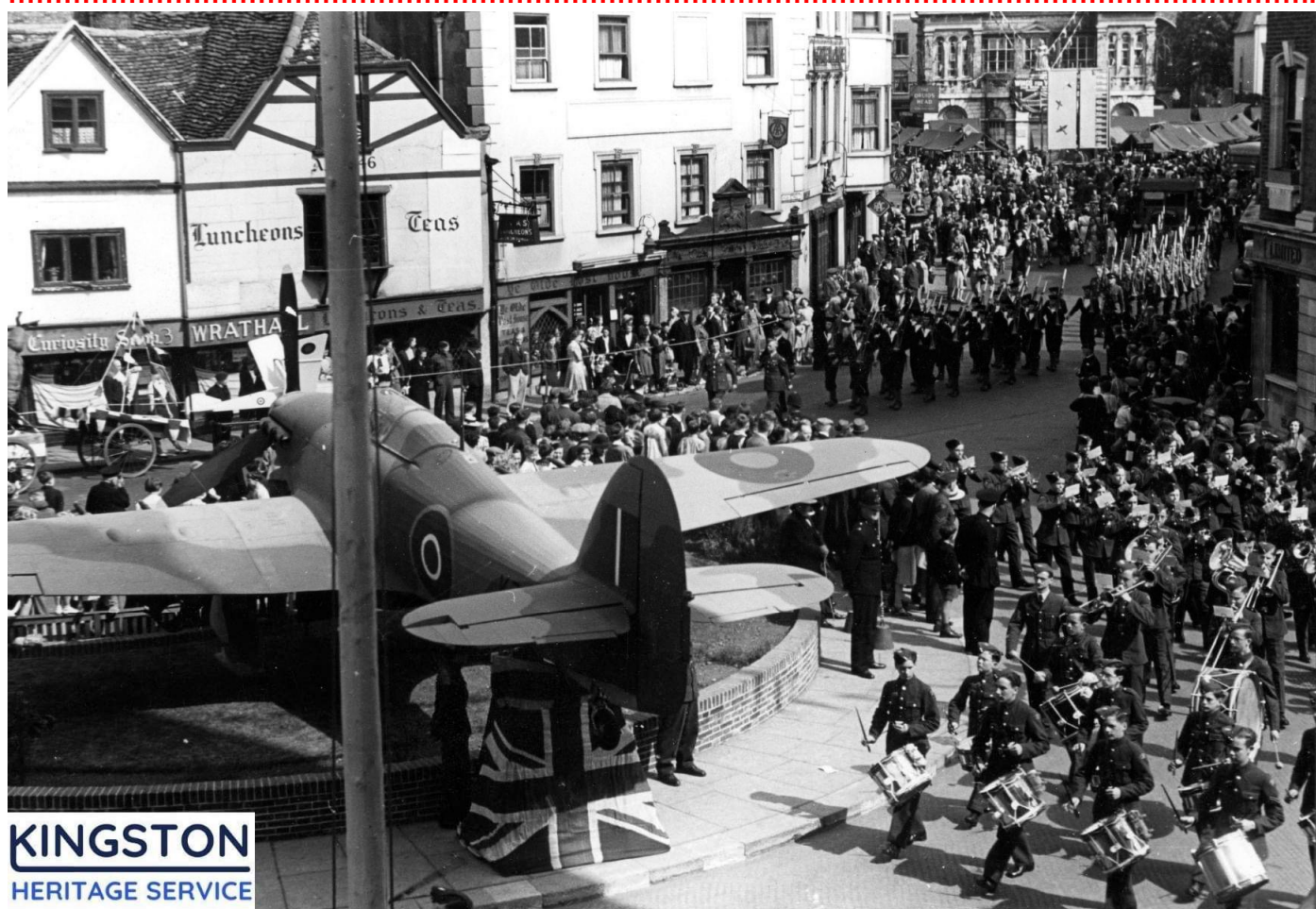
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**During WW II, U.S. airplanes were armed with belts of bullets which were folded into the wing compartments for their machine guns. The belts measured 27 feet long and contained hundreds of rounds of bullets. Often the pilots would return from their missions having fired all their bullets and would say “I gave them the whole nine yards”.**

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Early politicians required feedback from the public to determine what the people considered important. As there was no other means of communication they would send their assistants to local taverns, pubs and bars etc and told to “go sip some Ale and listen to people's conversations and concerns”. Assistants were dispatched at different times. 'You go sip here' and 'You go sip there.' The two words 'go sip' were eventually combined when referring to the local opinion and thus we have the word 'gossip.'

Our first Pub Lunch of 2022 was enjoyed by about 19 members and partners on a fine sunny day, Thursday 13th January, at The Elmer pub. Thanks once again to David Tippett for the organisation. In February we are returning to The Fox in Patching on Thursday 10th and the menu has already been circulated. This is another good opportunity to escape the winter's gloom at this cosy Pub so let's try and swell the usual attendance. There's plenty of parking space.



I have managed to get hold of this very rare image, taken in 1945, of something that was kept top secret for decades. It shows the only Hawker Hurricane capable of vertical take-off and landing.

This is a late new year's resolution worth keeping :-

Never mention your secrets whilst in the garden, or on an allotment.

The sweetcorn has ears, the potatoes have eyes and the runner beanstalk.

Here are a few dictionary definitions, perhaps new to you, as they were to me.

Willy-nilly (adj.), impotence.

Negligent (adj.), describes a condition in which you absentmindedly answer the door in your night-ware.

Lymph (v.), to walk with a lisp.

Flatulance (n.) emergency vehicle that picks you up after you are run over by a steamroller.



A bloke goes to the local council to apply for a job in the office. One of the interviewer's questions was "Are you allergic to anything?" He replied, "Yes, caffeine."

"Have you ever worked for the public service before?"  
"Yes, I was in the army." he says, "I was in Iraq for two tours." The interviewer says, "That will give you 5 extra points toward employment."

Then he asks, "Are you disabled in any way?" The guy says, "Yes. A mine exploded near me when I was there, and I lost both my testicles". The interviewer grimaces and then says, "O.K. You've got enough points for me to take you on right away."

Our normal hours are from 8.00am to 4.00pm.....but you can start tomorrow at 10.00am and carry on starting at 10.00am every day."

The bloke is puzzled and asks, "If the work hours are from 8.00am to 4.00pm, why don't you want me here until 10.00am? I'm not looking for any special treatment."

"What you have to understand is that this is a council job," the interviewer says, "For the first two hours we just stand around drinking coffee and scratching our nuts. There's no point in you coming in for that."

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- **I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.**
  - I changed my iPod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.
  - **I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.**
  - This girl today said she recognized me from the Vegetarians Club, but I've never met herbivore
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### Commemorative Tree Planting

**Arundel's Mayor, Cllr Tony Hunt, will plant a Memorial Tree in Jubilee Gardens, Arundel at noon on Sunday 6th February to commemorate the Queen's seventy-year reign. All are welcome.**

**Later on, another tree planting event is planned in memory of those lost or affected by Covid 19 locally.**

**A third planting is proposed which will be a "thank you" to all front-line NHS personnel working during the pandemic.**

**An Arundel Tree Fund has been opened to receive public donations for further tree planting in the Town's green spaces. Donations may be sent to Arundel Town Council and individual trees may be sponsored, perhaps in memory of a loved one. An Arundel Tree Nursery is also planned where small trees (seedlings and saplings) can be grown-on until large enough to be transplanted locally.**

**Sadly, one of the young, sponsored Lime trees on Mill Road was vandalised in December so a replacement has been planted. (Bring back the stocks and the ducking stool, I say. ) h**

**Now more of the original Lime trees are having to be removed by the Highways Authority so further individual tree sponsorship is invited.**

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**I employed a workman to do several jobs for me. I wrote them down for him, numbering 1 to 10. When he left, I found he hadn't done four jobs so I called him and complained. He said he was only an odd job man.**

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Very best wishes, dear readers, and see you again soon, hopefully. Bob