



# Probity

Adrian Turner

## PROBUS GOES SUPERSONIC (ON WET-WEATHER TYRES)

Indulgence in expensive and extravagant pastimes has often been a disposition of the wealthy; Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos both have a penchant for space travel and space tourism. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the attraction was for speed; however, in an earthlier domain: fast cars, soaring aircraft and ocean-going yachts.

In 1903 cars had been limited by law to 20 mph and UK enthusiasts and embryonic motor manufacturers were concerned that this would limit the development of the UK car industry, to the advantage of the French and Germans. A response was to build private tracks where cars and engines could be developed and tested at speed. In 1906, Hugh Fortescue Locke King, a wealthy entrepreneur, had built, a 2.75 mile, essentially oval, highly banked track at Brooklands, then in rural Surrey, near Weybridge. To save some of his cash, presumably to buy bigger and faster cars, he eschewed more expensive tarmac and used concrete, a surface which it transpired gave a somewhat 'exciting' ride. Famous users of this track included Charles Rolls and Billy Cotton, of Wakey-Wakey fame, neither of which, as they say, "were short of a bob or two". Motor racing was and still is a costly sport. The area within the track was used, almost simultaneously, for that other rich person's entertainment – flying. During WW1



*Mach 2 and not a hair out of place!*

day for weeks either side! However, despite the weather, all seemed to enjoy the day, beginning with a film presentation of the history of Brooklands, then a guided tour of some of the more significant areas. 11 of the group boarded Concorde to experience a simulated take off.

After the Great War, Brooklands became a major training facility for the Royal Flying Corps, soon to become the RAF. Brooklands became a centre of racing car and aircraft innovation and the nucleus works that sprang up there became the manufacturing bases for Vickers and Hawker, an important source of fighters and bombers throughout WW2.

Nearly 120 years after that start, most of the banked track has gone, but enough remains to envisage how demanding it must have been – no crash barriers, then or now! But Cars and Aircraft are still very much the fabric of this place, now a world-famous museum. Most exhibits are static, but no less meaningful in their aesthetic beauty and their exceptional engineering.

As is the case with museums that have grown over the years, there is much to see and instruct and on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March a covid-reduced group of 17 members travelled there by coach on what was to be the only wet

coach on what was to be the only wet day for weeks either side! However, despite the weather, all seemed to enjoy the day, beginning with a film presentation of the history of Brooklands, then a guided tour of some of the more significant areas. 11 of the group boarded Concorde to experience a simulated take off.

*Cont overleaf*

# COVID vs Bureaucracy - Our Doctor goes back to Work

Just over 18 months ago the first vaccines appeared, produced safely in a rubber arm. We now had our ‘Wings’: fully-fledged in record time to fight the menace of COVID. A significant Grade 5 Vaccinators. Off to our vaccination base – more step, and then the challenge of delivering to the public. The paperwork, surgical scrubs and learning how to sing Happy Birthday for 20 seconds. Although GMC contacted all retired doctors – would you like to go back on the ‘Performers List’? A firm YES from me and my wife, Vicki, but marching in and start jabbing was not, as we discovered, an option.

‘Volunteering’ was out; it was ‘Employment’ and the recruitment/training processes were led by, as it transpired, a company, which, in everything, seemingly could not organise ‘Brewery-base Activities’. This Company’s protocols had been devised without any apparent logic and probably based more on avoiding any future litigation (for all involved) than being fit-for-purpose.

Firstly, the SCREENING INTERVIEW, which followed *different* paths for me and Vicki. Provision of Referees; not easy following 10 years in retirement. evidence of immunisations going back over 70 years and then more forms, forms, and more forms. Secondly came TRAINING MODULES, 21 in total, including the ‘more useful’: fire safety, conflict resolution. Somewhere in there was How to give an Injection and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. The last could prove useful, as by that time ‘I was losing the will to live’, as they say. Ultimately, we were told that, because of our qualifications, we really needed to have done only five modules!! We then moved on to PRACTICAL and mercifully this part of our indoctrination was shortened because we could competently show we could draw-up a syringe and stick it



obsession for gel-cleaning all and everything, although by this time the virus was proved to be airborne. Men in Sunday Best, sporting medals, ladies with coiffures, specially prepared for the occasion, car workers, Lords and some from the Uni who’d worked on the vaccine’s development. Shifts were 6 to 12 hours and in the 6-hour shift, which we selected, 60 to 100 vaccinations could be achieved – we at the upper end. Often shifts were over-staffed or littered with hangers-on. As a metric, 75% of all jabs were eventually given by GPs in their surgeries.

Now, after a flurry of school vaccinations, we are unemployed, waiting for the next booster campaign to accelerate. But in summary, it has been a fascinating, useful, and rewarding time – life saving in fact. We have seen the British Public in all its guises and to a man, woman and child have been polite, cooperative and, above all, very grateful for the NHS and its vaccination programme.

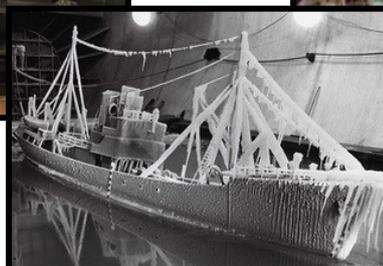
*Rhys Hamilton*

## BROOKLANDS VISIT (cont.)

Two items in particular seemed to catch Member’s imagination. Firstly, the mighty Stratospheric Chamber which enabled high altitude and low temperature testing of aircraft and, surprisingly, ships. Investigations were carried out to establish why trawlers were being mysteriously lost at sea. Icing of the standing rigging and superstructure, leading to capsize was the answer. Secondly, a Wellington Bomber undergoing reconstruction, following its recovery from Loch Ness. Of special note, our late-lamented member Tom Jones flew in this very aircraft! (photos John Gray)



**Above: Gordon reckons he could just about afford the Napier-Railton Special, but Trevor’s not convinced he could afford to put any petrol in it!**

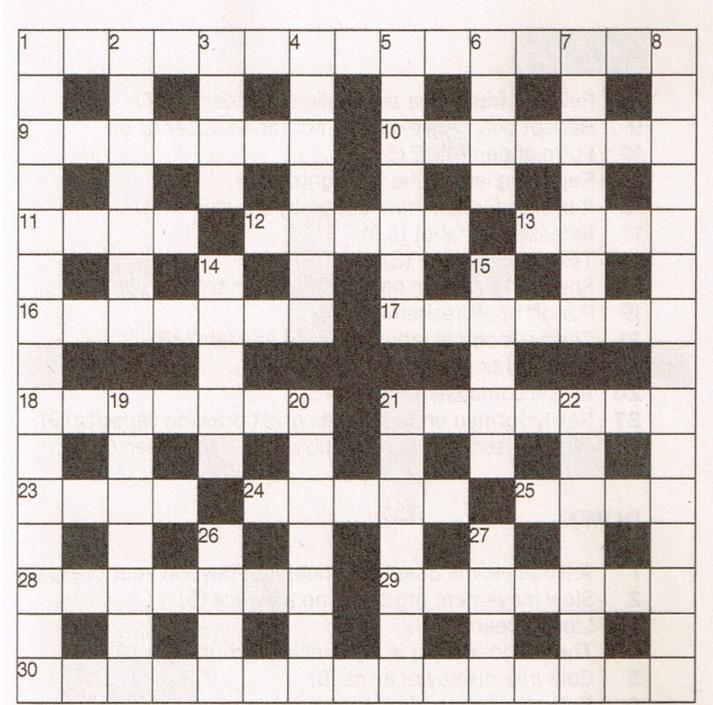


**Above: The late Tom Jones’ Wellington, showing Barnes-Wallace geodesic structure. Left: Trawler model under-going ice testing in the Stratospheric Chamber**

# XEDSXWORD No 11

Your Xword Setter will pay £10 to the charity of choice of the sender of the first all-correct solution drawn out of the hat at our May meeting. Closing date 30th April.

Send your entries to **John Gray**,  
[john@thegrays.myzen.co.uk](mailto:john@thegrays.myzen.co.uk) or 13 Holmlea Road



Name(s).....



Solution to XEDSXWORD 10

Congratulations to the winners,

**Robin & Mary Carr**

## Across

1. Spring-driven youthful imagination? (1,5,4,5)
9. Distance reversed by, for example, a brewer's cart (7)
10. Popular lager drunk around Tyneside. (7)
11. First-class handwritten plans. (4)
12. Send clock back. (5)
13. Lonely game sounds the pits. (4)
16. Seek to gainsay backward Colonials. (7)
17. Phil's group's first booking. (7)
18. British wet weather to the East of besieged nation. (7)
21. Hum coda to "The Great Fuss" (4,3)
23. Hymns sung without afterthought for charitable giving (4)
24. Company boss admitted two students of instrument. (5)
25. Punish all well and good. (4)
28. Tear off a short skirt and achieve ends! (7)
29. Narcotic dispensed by the drum or phial. (7)
30. Let Citroen wreck The National Grid? (8,7)

## Down

1. Way Wayne, a Mounity, went West as Elvis sang (3,3,3,4,2)
2. Eight in a row. (7)
3. Close tight! (4)
4. Do they get together to hear measuring devices describing distances? (7)
5. Ganging up and scolding. (7)
6. If this foolish feeling changed loud start for quiet, it'd be really wet! (4)
7. Northern pointers to Kyles of Bute or Dardanelles (7)
8. Sporty Allen woke up in Wyoming. (11,4)
14. Excellence obtained from 12. (5)
15. Hungry? Stuff any number in bag for quick fix! (5)
19. Guilty feeling about detective? (7)
20. Have temerity to change group of retirees? Almost! (7)
21. Impossible task for daily delivery chap? (7)
22. Onomatopoeic call for paper hankie? (7)
26. Given the right, this hand would lead. (4)
27. Find courage getting right into unpleasant type. (4)

# TWINNING - NO LONGER WHAT IT WAS !

Possibly the most enduring legacies of the Goring and District Twinning Association are the intangible ones: many happy memories and lasting friendships.

The more tangible are Goring Village Hall's second largest room and the block of nine homes in Station Road, both named after Bellême, our twin town in France. A more conspicuous legacy of the forty-plus year life of the twinning association, however, is the gilded cockerel weathervane above the Village Hall given by Bellême in 1989 and refurbished earlier this year. Other more discreet legacies include an ornamental but fully functioning water tap, a gift from Bellême to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the link. After a long search for a suitable home for this, it is now installed on the very boundary of the village, in the forecourt of The Swan at Streatley. There is also a sun dial high on the front of the Royal Mail building, given in 1999 to mark the twentieth anniversary, and tablets on the walls of the village hall, erected to commemorate the fifteenth and thirtieth anniversaries of the association, in 1994 and 2009 respectively.

Among gifts that went the other way were two red telephone boxes, a mosaic set in the centre of Bellême and a tapestry "inspired and organised" by Mary Lyons that resides in the local town hall.

The twinning association was effectively wound up at the end of last year and Adrian Turner lamented its passing in a fascinating and colourfully illustrated account of its ups and downs in his lecture on 9 March. Adrian reminded us that twinning of towns and villages between European countries was encouraged officially as a gesture of international friendship following the ravages of WW2. The Goring association was initiated by former Probus chairman, Norman Radley in 1978 and held its first meeting in 1979. Goring was originally one of a trio of twinned towns, the third being the Black Forest town of Stühlingen, close to the source of the Danube, in what was then West Germany. The bilateral twinning of Bellême and Stühlingen continues.

Bellême, Adrian pointed out, was not Goring's only French option for twinning. The others included a town on the Côte d'Azur. Bellême was chosen "because it was the nearest and



G&S 'Twins' at Stühlingen, 2013 (Adrian centre)

roughly the same distance from the Channel coast as Goring". Adrian himself joined the association on its fifth birthday. Before that he spoke no French and, he said, to this day none of their French hosts speak English. But over the years he had made many new friends, in Goring as well as in France.

Adrian produced photographic evidence to demonstrate that the French tend to be "more nationalistic than us". They also appeared more xenophobic. Among many anecdotes, he referred to a headline in the tabloid newspaper, *France-Soir* warning of the arrival of a party from Goring that was going "to teach the French how to cook": "Village in Normandy terrified...English cordon-bleus about to land", it screamed. These English, *France-Soir* bellowed, owed everything, "including their architecture, to our good Duke William"! What the newspaper failed to make clear was that this visit was a return fixture, the previous reunion having been a visit to Goring by the *Bellémois* to teach us how to cook.

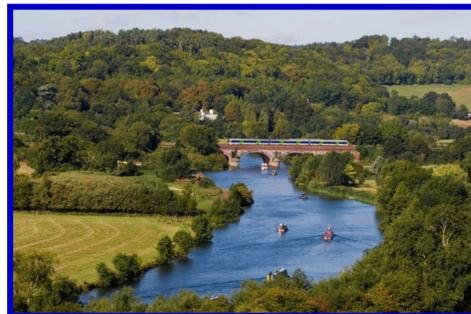
Not everyone would agree with Adrian's conclusion, that "Our cuisine is so much better than the French. Theirs is so narrow. We eat Indian food as well." Typically, he said, "we taught them how to play conkers and they beat us at it!"

The last visit to Goring was in 2018, when a party from Bellême school stayed at the youth hostel in Streatley. The last visit to Bellême was in October 2019, when activities included mushroom gathering in the *Fôret de Bellême* and twenty-nine people from Goring took part. This compares with one hundred in 1984, one of the peak years. Between 1979 and 2019 a total of 1,463 visitors have come to Goring from Bellême, with 1,368 going the other way. Among factors that had contributed to the recent decline was, of course, the two year hiatus due to Covid. But Brexit and its consequences were also to blame, including the high cost of weekend travel and the need for French people to carry passports, as a *carte d'identité* is no longer adequate for travel to the UK. "The world has changed and people are no longer interested," Adrian concluded.

John Boler

## Celebrate G & S PROBUS 500

Wednesday August 10th



Champagne on Ice—possibly  
Icebergs—a definite 'no'  
Seasickness Pills—not required  
Pirate Outfit—if you must

**Guaranteed**—Fun and Great Company  
on a 5-hour Thames Valley Summer Cruise  
from Goring and back  
'Admiral's' Lunch, Music and Lots More !!  
**YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED**

Bookings for Members, Partners  
and Friends to  
[gordon@springwoodhouse.com](mailto:gordon@springwoodhouse.com)  
Cost £50 p.p (to Treasurer Trevor)