



A New Year, and the Probus baton (actually a gavel) has been passed to our new Chairman, Alan.

Our sincere gratitude to Preston, who sprinted two Probus laps during this, oft described as, “unprecedented” period. When social mixing was severely regulated, Preston provided much needed cohesiveness, and informed and entertained us with his regular Newsletter of topical and seasonal observations, dusted with an assortment of the best of (mainly) satirical cartoons.



A smiling Alan Matthews following his inauguration at the AGM

I asked Alan, the new incumbent, to present his thoughts and aspirations for Goring and Streatley Probus during his year in office.....

“Well, certainly no more Newsletters. I’m not planning to compete with the Master. However, as I hinted at the AGM, I might be tempted to use the Chair to offer a mini teach-in on Middlesbrough. But you might be lucky!

Perhaps watchwords for 2022 are ‘freedom’ and ‘socialise’. Nice to think that at some stage we’ll be free to meet without masks – with a negligible risk of

infecting each other. When it happens, let’s take advantage, staying for a beer and a chat after a meeting - and maybe an occasional lunch.

This year’s August meeting will be the 500th meeting of the Club, and the Committee will be working on plans to offer a memorable event; a great opportunity for some summer socialising. Fingers crossed for good weather.

New members are always welcome and I’m sure that we shall be up-to-strength again soon. I’m hesitant about approaching anyone else in Nun’s Acre; we might have to rename the Club.

For the future, I quite like the idea of replacing some of our traditional one hour presentations with a mixture of mini-talks. Also, I wonder if members might be more attracted to Committee positions if the commitment was reduced from three years to something more flexible. Perhaps some reshaping ahead—something to ponder.”

My Best Wishes for 2022 to You and Yours

A MEDIEVAL JEWEL IN OXFORD

Those Members who are fans of Morse will be familiar with the Bodleian building, which was often a passing background to many murder investigations.

The Bodleian precedes Morse by quite a few years. Building began in 1428 on this, the first of the University’s buildings. By its completion in 1488 it had employed a number of Master Masons, sponsored by a variety of patrons, mainly bishops, enthusiastic about slightly different architectural styles. Many falling-outs, sackings and ups and downs in financing.



This early building is primarily three rooms, The first, The Divinity School (above) with its superb fan-vaulted ceiling, was used for tutoring and then examining students, through a process called Disputation.

Cont P.4 →

**December’s Mystery Member
was Keith Pacey**

EXCUSE ME— I JUST NEED TO COUNT THE ENGINES !!

Have you had that experience, when flying, of being asked to lean back in your seat so an important member of the Crew can count the engines or, worse still, check that most of the wing is still there. All part and parcel of a day in the office for Peter Jerram, who was a Flight Engineer, firstly with BOAC/BA and subsequently Virgin Airways.

Peter at a very young age, when with his parents in Cairo – his father worked for Imperial Airways - began a life-long interest in aircraft (for some it's cars and others, trains, or boats). This developed into an Apprenticeship with The De Havilland Aircraft Company and he was subsequently persuaded to join BOAC as a Flight Engineer, firstly on Comets, then VC-10s and finally 747s.

Peter's January talk to Probus was very modestly presented and was packed with personal anecdotes about near-misses and quick-thinking solutions to complex and urgent problems. The highlight was his narrative of an emergency stop in a 747, which resulted in the severe over-heating and collapse of all 16 wheels. His fascinating talk was complemented by photographs, some very nostalgic from the Golden Days of aviation.

As a lead into this presentation, our new Chairman, Alan Matthews, who informed us he was a Yorkshiremen, (well, no one's perfect Alan) showed a clip from a 1990s Hale and Pace Show about a very low-budget Yorkshire Airlines. Perhaps a precursor to today's no-frills air travel.

Although Peter didn't include this in his talk, around the bar afterwards, he told how on the inaugural flight by Virgin to New York, on which Peter was Flight Engineer, Richard Branson served drinks to the passengers dressed only in a pair of lady's knickers. No slide of that (un)fortunately!

Sad to relate, in this age of fly-by-wire and increasingly powerful computers, the era of the Flight Engineer has come to an end. Remote system monitoring and onboard assistance to the crew has done away with the need for the 'Third Seat'.



Above: Peter at the Flight Officer's Station on a Virgin Atlantic 747

Left: A Comet 4 circa 1960



BROOKLANDS MUSEUM



You don't have to be a Petrolhead or Biggles fan to enjoy a day out at this entertaining Venue. Lots to see and something to excite all tastes, including a restaurant

Wednesday March 16th

Cost £44

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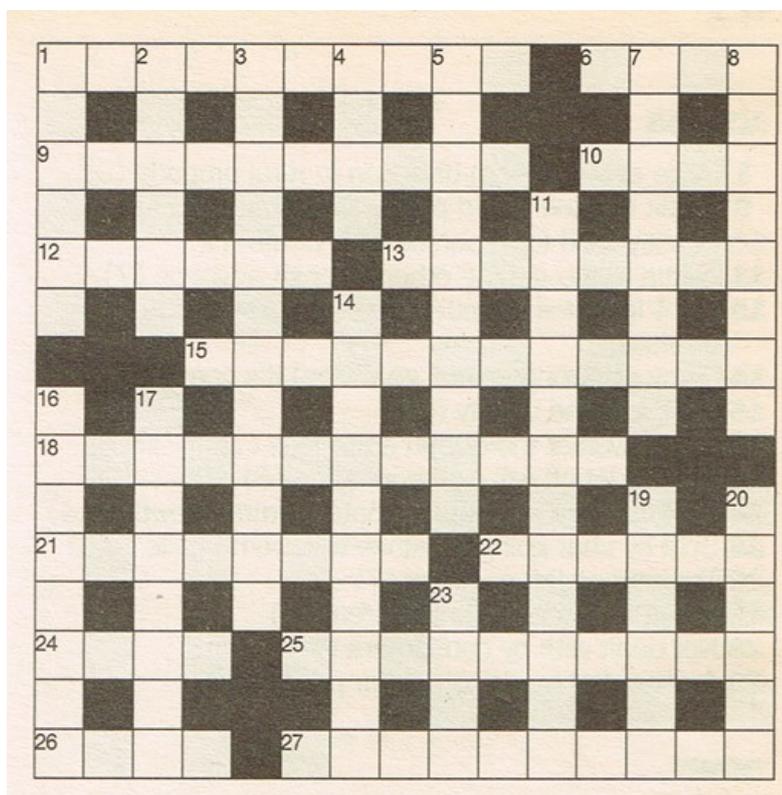
Contact Gordon Wotherspoon



XEDSXWORD No 10

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 March meeting. Closing date 28th February.

Send your entries to John Gray,
john@thegrays.myzen.co.uk or 13 Holmlea Road



Name(s).....

Charity



Solution to XedsXmasXtravaganza
 Congratulations to the Winner

John Spokes

Across

1. Supports piles, when it comes down to these! (5,5)
6. Belies a little extra dirty talkback (4)
9. Scotsmen at hairdresser misheard uncivilized people (10)
10. Warmth of feeling in Anglo-Welsh relations (4)
12. Misplace computer stuff and fly off the handle. (4,2)
13. Pontiff rung about assailant. (8)
15. Low down, source of Bob's homesick blues. (12)
18. Dresser positions sought by members? (7,5)
21. Careless way brickie's mate passes carrier. (8)
22. Want the French to irritate. (6)
24. Apprehend love, back in west coast port. (4)
25. BOAC satire resulted in high jinks! (10)
26. Here's Hook's mate - duck! (4)
27. Choir types may be four voices, but can be two-faced (10)

Down

1. Senseless talk when graduate youth group met the French (6)
2. A rude-sounding preposition. (6)
3. Pacino susses-out there's lots of room. (12)
4. Religious education in our time - very dry. (4)
5. Cousin, maybe Perkin's son. (10)
7. Mother, don't go and pretend to be ill! (8)
8. Grew into elevated position. (8)
11. A father unfit to provide entertainment (3,2,3,4)
14. Attorney is represented in papers. (10)
16. Cuts musical siblings? (8)
17. Bad act that is construed to renounce office (8)
19. User - divine one indeed. (6)
20. Disorderly dining halls. (6)
23. List nothing for trademark. (4)

(cont. P.1) Disputation was a process in which two students would discuss and argue with one another, in Latin of course. These disputes could last days and other members of the University would ‘walk in’ and put questions and other considerations to the disputees. The first formal written exams didn’t begin until the 19th century.

The adjoining room is The Convocation House (left), the university’s original council chamber with an ornately-carved wooden throne and lectern for the Vice Chancellor. A room off the Convocation House was a small court where the University’s Proctors examined and passed judgement on both students and scholars. The accused stood in a small central dock, while his inquisitors sat in relative comfort on the surrounding benches. I say ‘he’; there were no women students or scholars at this time. The first lady Vice Chancellor, Louise Richardson FRSE, was appointed as recently as 2015.

The main medieval library was located on the floors above. Libraries were built above ground level to avoid the ravages of flood and also mice which were particularly fond of chewed books as nesting material. The library was originally established in 1340 by Humphrey, a brother of Henry V, at the nearby university church of St Mary and moved to the Bodleian in 1488. Originally the library possessed just a few hundred manuscripts but with the coming of printing in the 15th century the library expanded rapidly. However, during the late 16th century the library suffered a serious decline until in 1598 one Thomas Bodley offered support for a redevelopment. In total the library houses 15 million books—in Oxford and at an extensive warehousing system at Shrivensham.

Words cannot describe the medieval interior and atmosphere of Humphrey’s Library (right). Photo taking here was not allowed and I’ve taken the liberty of downloading one. I also include two photos



(on display) of the School (P.1) and The Convocation House (left) dressed for ceremonies and not unattired as our Probus party saw it.



Bodleian Libraries
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



BLACK GOLD— A Book Review

I recently read Jeremy Paxman’s latest book, which relates ‘The History of how Coal made Britain’. I always find Paxman’s messages very clear and well researched, and this work, as usual, contains a good smattering of his witty irony. His comparisons of fabulously rich mine owners and their deprived and poverty-stricken workers, many young children, are familiar narratives, as are the descriptions of some of the major mining disasters, but he provides excellent insights on how Britain’s commerce and Empire were founded on steam, steel making and many other industries that relied upon the “black rock that burned”. A black rock that the British Isles had in abundance.

The decline of the British Coal Industry began in 1913 (many WW1 warships were oil-fired) and survived by amalgamations and increasing closures of unviable pits, accelerated more recently by ‘The Dash to Gas’. It was news to me that in September 1983 Margaret Thatcher and a very few selected members of her Cabinet secretly met to discuss and agree the strategy and tactics for shutting down the Coal Mines (minutes that were not allowed to be copied – so, no leaks in Maggie’s day). Arthur Scargill, the NUM President, may have been wrong on many things, but he was correct on this key point. Scargill was one of several characters, others were Joe Gormley, Mick McGahey, Alf Robens, Derek Ezra, Ian MacGregor, Anthony Wedgewood-Benn and Nicholas Ridley; all prime-time TV regulars. Some, like Arthur with his comb-over, have passed into

folklore. The biggest casualty of events was, of course, Ted Heath. At the height of the miner’s strike in 1974, I recollect struggling to complete my PhD, using an IBM 360 main frame computer which ran infrequently because of the power cuts.

The real significance of this book is the part coal has and will continue to play in Global Warming and its prominence in discussions and fudged agreements at COP26. Paxman succinctly argues that it is a challenge to persuade the Indians and the Chinese to give up coal when a large proportion of the CO₂ now in the atmosphere can be traced back to the smoke of the British Industrial Revolution.

My one complaint is that the book would have benefited from more illustrations of the political and other contemporary players during the ‘74 and ‘84/’85 strikes. Notwithstanding, a recommended read and anyone may borrow my copy on condition they hand over their passport and house-keys.

Editor

