



At the meeting in April, the Committee proposed, through the Chair, that Probus donate £500 to the DEC for Ukraine and this was unanimously agreed by the participants. Coincidentally, at the same meeting, Terry Hookway informed that he and his wife had offered to share their family home with a young Ukrainian woman, who was a talented artist and skilled pianist.

I was both surprised and impressed by this initiative, especially as the Press at the time was replete with criticism of the Home Office for the sluggish way visas were being processed. It subsequently transpired that some of the Hookway's wider family had made a similar gesture and in our locality about 70 refugees have found shelter with 16 other families.

I gleaned this additional information at a meeting held on the 16th May in the Free Church to welcome some of these "visitors"; to introduce them to each other and the wider local community. I took this opportunity to invite, to accompany me, a Ukrainian husband and wife - Attila, who uses the less threatening diminutive Otti, and Marina, who, for her sins, is also my very patient piano teacher. They have been resident in the UK for a number of years and live in Basingstoke; 'Amazingstoke', as they call it.

The photo above show Otti (left) and Marina (right) talking with Alex and his wife Olena, who escaped Mariupol very early in the war and travelled, via a number of Russian occupied villages, to Lviv and then by rail via the Polish border town of Przemysl to Katowice, in south-central Poland, and to the UK through Germany and France. This journey took four weeks and never again will I moan about the drive my Polish wife and I take to Warsaw every couple of years.

Alex showed Otti and me some iphotos of the area in Mariupol where he lived. All now very familiar images, but the impact of seeing these first-hand, so to speak, was very upsetting. I very quickly realised it was probably insensitive to quiz him about his and his wife's ordeal and left them both to talk to Otti, Marina and the other Ukrainians and exchange contact details.

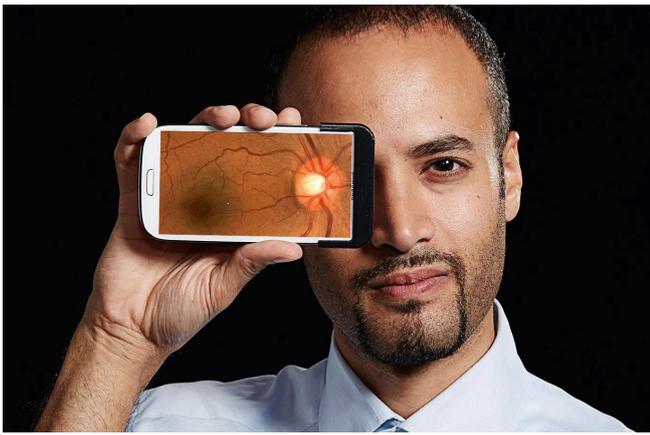


After this Get-together, which will be repeated every third Monday, Otti, Marina and I went to lunch and during the meal Otti explained that the challenge, for hosts and guests, is the big cultural differences. Many Ukrainians, especially older ones, will have experienced life under Communism, where thought about individual needs was actively discouraged and even punished. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the state owned assets were stolen and re-stolen by various factions. Much of the wealth became controlled by a relatively small number of families.

Corruption and lawlessness were rife and Otti, who owned a steel fabrication company near Kiev, employing a few hundred people, had to pay-off various protection rackets in order to get contracts and keep away the police and tax men who otherwise would visit claiming bogus law violations and non-legitimate taxes. Following the Donbas War in 2014, his business collapsed entirely and he was fortunate to be able to move to the UK.

This bad situation has severely worsened, as a result of the War. Perhaps some refugees will ultimately want to return to rebuild their lives. However, the British for all their faults, real or imaginary, have a long history of offering a welcome and safety to those less fortunate. Long may it be so !

John Spokes



MICRO AND MACRO VIEWS OF EYE HEALTH

Biblical and other Miracles may be a matter of faith, but, in this modern era, the ingenuity of Man and his acquired skills means that through Medical Science, modern and more explicable ‘miracles’ are now everyday occurrences.

One man changing the lives of many is Dr and Professor Andrew Bastawrous, a Goring resident (his wife, who is also a doctor, comes from Goring). A doctor and surgeon who specialises in eye surgery. He is the son of Egyptian immigrants to the UK and two events in his life had a profound impact on his view of life, one literally. The first was being prescribed with glasses aged 11, which enabled him to see properly and transported him from someone having challenges at school to the scholar and specialist he is today. The second was during a visit to Egypt, where he became aware of how few people wore glasses, and probably unnecessarily so. He decided to devote his life to remedying some of the problems of poor eyesight in less privileged countries. He completed a PhD at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine studying Population Health as distinct from individual health, and so combined the macro with the micro.

To promote his philosophy, he moved, with his family, to Kenya, where initially he set-up 100 eye clinics, performing procedures such as cataract operations himself and training others to perform less difficult tasks, such as eye tests. During this period, he had his ‘Eureka’ moment and began to consider the application of mobile phone technology to solving some of the difficulties of eye health. Ironically, although water and roads may be scarce in some remote Kenyan areas, there is always a mobile signal. Working on this basis, he developed technology for remotely carrying out eye tests, from which he could make diagnoses about the vision correction required and used the ever-increasing amount of data collected to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives: firstly, in ‘capturing’ patients and, secondly, follow-up and assessing the overall results.

Incredible to relate, persons who had not seen for 20 years and more could suddenly see their long-remembered surroundings, grown-up children and long-time partners – perhaps a shock in more sense than one.

ONE OF TIN PAN ALLEY’S GUITAR MEN

At our well-attended February meeting, the first post COVID, Ron Muriel entertained us relating aspects of his career in the Music Business and his expertise in the retailing of musical instruments and especially the guitar.



Ron began learning piano aged 11 and 4 years later bought his first guitar, a Watkins Rapier (for the aficionados). This interest, together with his skill at repairing guitars and amps, led him in 1971 to open his own business in Covent Garden and in 1974 he moved to Denmark Street, near Tottenham Court Road Station. In earlier centuries this area had a seedy reputation, but for some time now Denmark Street has been a mecca for musicians and is known as London’s ‘Tin Pan Alley’. Ron plays guitar intuitively, mainly Rock – ‘‘too many fancy chords in Jazz’’ - apparently!

This business bought him into contact with many rich and famous names in the popular music world: Charles ‘Chuck’ Berry, who he initially failed to recognise, Hank Marvin, The Who, Genesis, Elton John’s Band. He was Road Manager at one time to Cliff Richard and Technical Manager to Robin Trower of Procol Harum.

Ron can tell many anecdotes from these days. On one occasion he was called to Olivia Newton-John’s apartment to repair her hi-fi. She disappeared off to the shower and then the phone rang. She called to him to answer it and he thinks it was her boyfriend. Ron told him she was in the shower. The man-caller was not a happy bunny!!

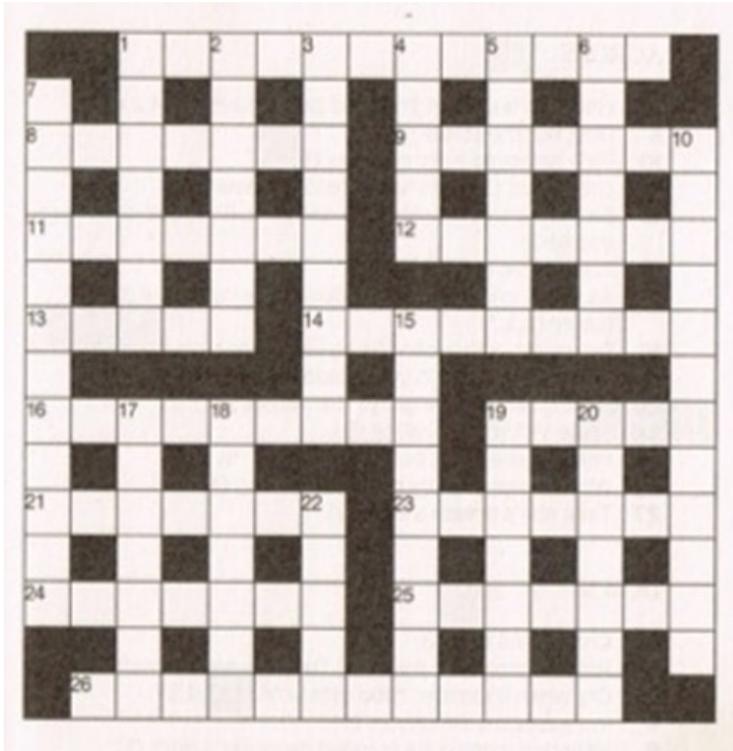


Ron with Hank Marvin on the occasion of the Opening of Ron’s other shop in Bodmin, Cornwall

XEDSXWORD No 12

Your Compiler will pay £10 to the charity of choice of the sender of the first all-correct solution drawn out of the hat at our July meeting. Closing date 30th June

Send your entries to John Gray,



Name(s).....

Charity.....



Solution to XEDSXWORD No 11

Congratulations to the winner,

Mark Taylor

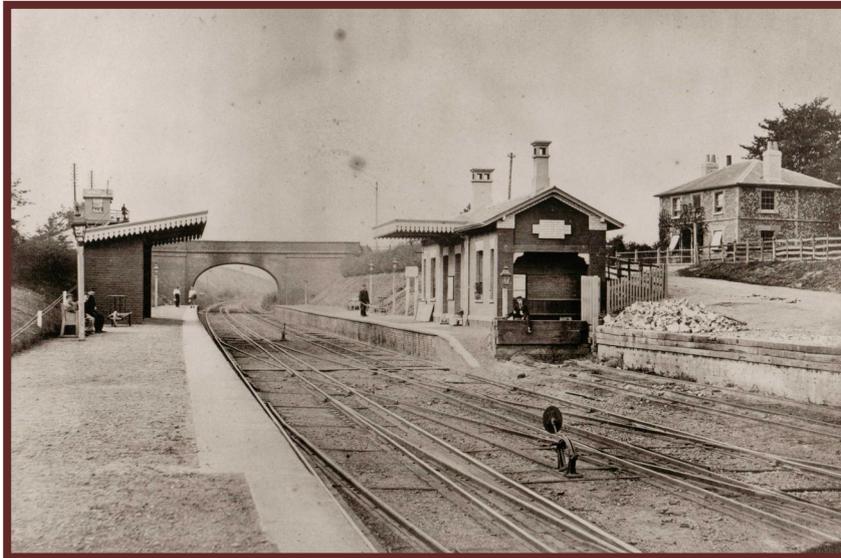
DOWN

ACROSS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. As loose as trained nurse gets! (12)</p> <p>8. Lengthy talk of hunter hiding article. (7)</p> <p>9. Seen as blotched. (7)</p> <p>11. Heard “addition, for example”, but not everyone agrees (4,3)</p> <p>12. Unknown number sick of attachment. (7)</p> <p>13. Supply delivered in time, when due. (5)</p> <p>14. Befuddled drunk added lots of confusion! (6,3)</p> <p>16. Nits aside, otherwise thoroughly cleaned. (9)</p> <p>19. Short assessment – they’re fools! (5)</p> <p>21. Rages on about above-noted Asians (7)</p> <p>23. Government storage? (7)</p> <p>24. Guy not in? Keep away! (4,3)</p> <p>25. Storm-damaged uproar. (7)</p> <p>26. Distil hot Arab cyder from sugar or starch. (12)</p> | <p>1. Venusian combat? (7)</p> <p>2. Another publication about children. (7)</p> <p>3. Syd joins any group of students out for pleasant times (5,4)</p> <p>4. Wrong about getting sticky stuff back to front. (5)</p> <p>5. Say you’ll marry little Elizabeth and make her an object of worship (7)</p> <p>6. Measure efforts in vestibules. (7)</p> <p>7. Catcalls about shortest protection from Covid? (7,5)</p> <p>10. Information conversion - understand it is at one on, as read (12)</p> <p>15. Devoted cadet died in confusion. (9)</p> <p>17. Falls over artist, again! (7)</p> <p>18. Simple generic name for complex nuclear device (3,4)</p> <p>19. Consort with a province. (7)</p> <p>20. See about how little Stanley might be feeling. (7)</p> <p>22. Famous short Trumpeter sitting in pews at church.(5)</p> |
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GORING BEFORE THE GANTRIES

Brunel built his 'billiard table railway' to connect London and Bristol and thereby shorten the journey time for sea travellers to and from the USA. Its construction began in 1838, reached Goring in 1840 and Bristol in 1841, reducing the overall journey time to 3 hours, a compression over road travel that required the introduction of Railway Time. His endeavour together, with the Thames toll bridge, which opened in 1837, transformed the situation of Goring from a small riverside hamlet, many miles from any main road, and began the diminishing of Stratley, until then an important staging post on the Reading to Oxford coach route.



Recently, Lionel Williams gave an excellent overview of *God's Wonderful Railway* and its *Great Way Round* route. A large part of the discussion afterwards concerned the original railway in the Goring locality and how it subsequently expanded into the facility it is today. Secretary Bernard mentioned that he had a copy of a magazine article about the early facilities, and indeed this is comprehensive in its detail.

Little is known about the first station, which opened on the 1st June 1840, and these wooden structures were partly destroyed by fire in 1865. Approval was quickly given for a replacement, at a cost of £500. This consisted of two brick-built structures: a booking office, waiting rooms and lavatories on the London-bound platform and a simple canopy on the opposite platform. The first photo shows the new station in 1866 (looking towards Didcot) with dual gauge track; goods trains were increasingly standard gauge by this time. Flint House, now Station House, is on the right and on the road bridge is a 'policeman's hut', an early form of signal box, and this provided a good view to control traffic.

One line of questioning at the meeting was how the track was quadrupled. This was carried out in 1894 and was done by laying two additional tracks to the north of the original permanent way. This required excavating the cutting in front of the Station House and the blue brick retaining wall to

facilitate this can be seen today. The second photo, taken in 1919 and looking towards Reading, shows this wall and the very tall semaphore signals, which enabled footplate crews, approaching from the west, to have a good sighting over the road bridge. The original broad-gauge layout, when converted

to standard gauge, left a very wide and open right of way compared with other railways that were constructed at the outset on a standard gauge layout.

More recently the station has changed significantly. The 25kV AC electrification was completed to the accompaniment of many complaints about the environmental intrusiveness of the robust gantry system used.

This required some raising of local bridges, to accommodate a change in loading gauge and the footbridge, which was in a somewhat dilapidated condition, was replaced in a new location and with the lobbying of MIGGS, led by John Boler, was incorporated with electric lifts and this is a much appreciated asset in our community.



Another area of discussion at the meeting was the difference in brick-coursing on Gatehampton viaduct. The first viaduct, to the south has 'straight' courses in the arches, whereas the newer bridge has arch courses set at an angle. This was an alternative technique to ease construction and to distribute more efficiently the stresses in a skew bridge, such as that at Gatehampton.

If you wish to inspect this structure close-up, then join, if you have not already decided to do so, our 500 Anniversary River Trip on Wednesday 10th August!

The railway ever changes and no doubt Brunel, who was a great innovator and proponent of new technology, would have adopted with vigour the electrification and associated over-head line equipment of the 21st century, just as he had promoted in 1844, his Devon Atmospheric Railway, a system of self-propulsion using, not electricity, but a vacuum; one of his occasional failures.