



Activities on hold till July at earliest

The committee has been keeping in touch via email and will hold monthly virtual meetings using internet technology. So far it has agreed to:

- Cancel all club and committee **meetings** up to and including June.
- Review the situation at the end of June to decide whether to make **further cancellations**.
- Cancel the **Garden Party** on 26 June.
- Consider arranging a **social gathering** later in the year when the pandemic risk has passed (this will

also be reviewed in late June).

- Continue to issue **Probity** and consider posting copies to all members while the club is suspended (Probity will continue to include a crossword puzzle and be published on the website, but in a single PDF format so that it can be printed at home).
- Ask any member who has not paid his **subscription** to do so (any excess funds generated will be used to benefit members or support operating costs, including Probity



by mail).

- Cancel the visit to **Highgrove** House on 30 April (ticket monies will be offered back to members once Highgrove has returned the full amount to the Treasurer).
- Arrange no further **visits** until the risks have disappeared (proposed visits on hold are: MCC / Lords cricket ground and Amazon fulfilment centre at Dunstable).
- Report **future committee decisions** by email or on the website or in Probity, as appropriate.



Dr Tim Smith, left, with talks secretary, Andy Richards at the March meeting. Dr Smith, curator of the museum of medical history at the Royal Berks hospital, gave a fascinating talk on the history of tuberculosis. (Photo: John Boler, report page 4)



Mystery member number two has spent many years away from the UK. He came close to losing his life in pursuit of thrills and may

be the only member to have volunteered at short notice for secondment from helping run one foreign country to help run another. Closer to home, for years he was part of an unsung team of volunteers that made sure we in Goring Gap were able each month to read all the local news and gossip that was fit to print. Indeed, volunteering has played an important part in his life to date.

The events that affected his current outlook on life began in April 2003. This was when he became one of five Whitehall civil servants chosen to help administer Iraq following the invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. "I became a sort of town clerk" in Basrah, he said. We didn't have the benefit of diplomatic protection, he explained, "But we were fed by the Black Watch!"

He believes that the Iraq experience exposed the foolishness of armchair generals who thought they knew it all. It also made western governments "realise the difficulties of expecting middle-east countries to conform to our concept of

Mystery member number one was Prof Alan Brookes, seen here in his element, sketching at St Albans cathedral

(photo: Bernard Novell)



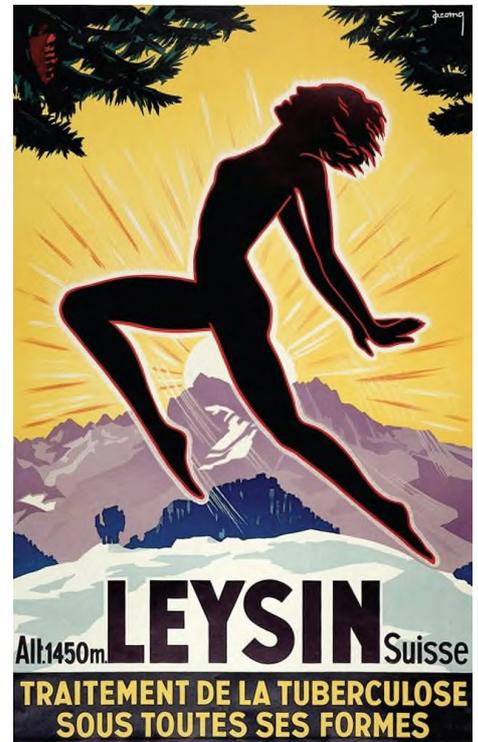
government". In that region, tribe rather than nation is the unit of identity; boundaries are cultural rather than political and justice and policing are not based on courts and the law. "Out of loyalty people did not betray their own tribe members and out of fear of retribution they did not betray those of other tribes."

In the course of work he's observed quite a few politicians at close quarters, including Patricia Hewitt, trade and industry secretary in Tony Blair's first government. On a mission to Iraq she surprised many by having as one of her highest priorities the promotion of women's rights in the country, barely six weeks after western control was imposed.

Looking back on his youth, our mystery member says that for his generation it was a rite of passage to "do the world" with a back-pack or in a camper van. There was full employment and "we didn't have to think too hard when postponing the search for a job and career". For him, however, youthful activities are not all a thing of the distant past. Five years ago he and his son paddled the Thames from its navigable source near Cricklade to the flood barrier near Greenwich. He was pleasantly surprised to see how clean our river now is. He is a keen kayaker and sees his hidden talent as making canoes, six of them to date, including two in a single year, 2002. An unfulfilled ambition is to complete his walk of the Pembrokeshire coastal path.

Some would say that, in his positive attitude to life and family, our mystery member epitomises the "new man" of modern culture. He has a strong religious faith and a keen sense of social responsibility. He contributes quietly to the community, locally in various roles at the Goring community centre and more widely through two homeless centres in Reading. He deprecates the growing prevalence of bad manners; the ubiquitous "lack of common courtesy". His examples vary widely, from "the honking of horns" to trolling on social media and demands for "safe spaces", a tendency that exposes a worrying "unwillingness to respect the opinions of others".

It's hard for him to choose a favourite live performance, but the front runners are Shakespeare's *King John* at Stratford and the Rolling Stones in Hyde Park, the latter curtailed somewhat for our mystery



This striking poster featured in the talk on tuberculosis, given to the club in March by Dr Tim Smith (photo p 1, full report p 4)

Don't try this at home!

Mrs Feeney shouted from the kitchen, "Is that you I hear spittin' in the vase on the mantelpiece?" "No", said himself, "but I'm gettin' closer all the time."

member by a sudden bout of illness.

A graduate chemical engineer, the places he has worked outside the UK include the USA and Papua New Guinea. It was due south of the latter, in the sea off Queensland, that our mystery member came close to losing his life. He was surfing during a cyclone and lost his surf board some 300 yards out to sea. He owes his survival to a fellow surfer who appeared as if from nowhere to help him ashore.

Had his surf board taken him to a desert island the book he would have wanted is *Zen and the art of motor cycle maintenance*. His luxury would be Julia Bradbury and the disc he would hang on to for dear life is Charlie Drake's 1961 hit, *My boomerang won't come back*.

His mother's name is Edna and it would be excusable, for those not in the know, to assume he's the son of a Dame, if only the pantomime kind. Who is mystery member number two?

Look for the answer in the next Probity

XEDSXWORD No 2

The Compiler will pay £10 to the charity of choice of the sender of the first all-correct solution drawn out of the hat by the editor.

Closing date 30th April

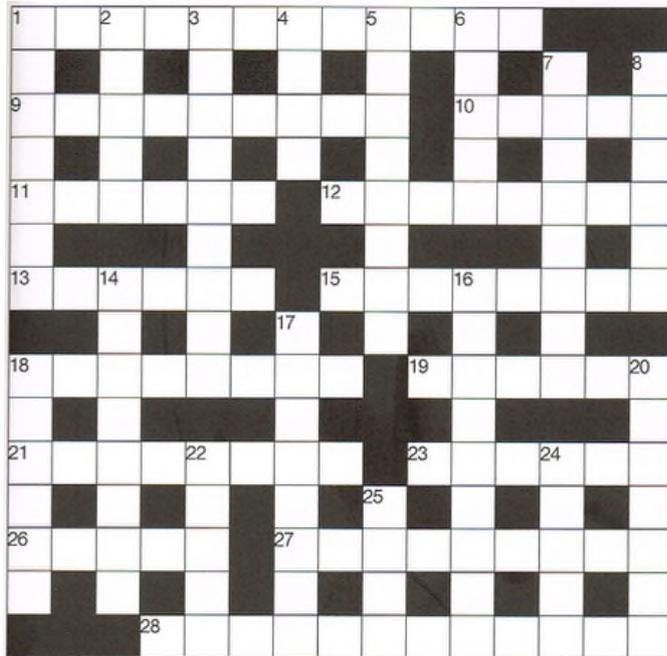
N.B. Send your entries to John Gray,
john@thegrays.myzen.co.uk

or

13 Holmlea Road

Name(s)

Charity



*Solution to EXEDSXword No.1
 Congratulations to the winner
 Tim Cox*

Across

1. Clear vision for this year. (6-6)
9. Cakewalk – and lots of it? (9)
10. Minister returning to Tyneside – over my dead body! (5)
11. Scavengers – any she may find roaming. (6)
12. Practise about stiff carriage! (8)
13. PIN-type security? (6)
15. Odd – around fifty choke. (8)
18. Endless worry, backing round on to car test next day. (8)
19. Equine shoe-shop? (6)
21. A cult, say, may give rise to accident. (8)
23. Remotely allergic response - a subject for discussion. (6)
26. Vassal on the Meuse? (5)
27. Line between nostrils meeting junction
 at thinnest point (9)
28. Woman’s laughter may be pleasing, but his is
 deadly! (12)

Down

1. Educates most of the drink container. (7)
2. Avoid losing pair from introduction. (5)
3. A little squint, H.M. brought to N. Yorks town (9)
4. Brown George started a sharp taste. (4)
5. Melt seen around fire and water (8)
6. Worried about past, present or future? (5)
7. State “old, got mean!” (8)
8. Border sounds chilly. (6)
14. Starving sect ate outside. (8)
16. Mighty member, partner for Siddley? (9)
17. Predicts wine finishes. (8)
18. Rugby interception to nail the French! (6)
20. Boatman, try each other way! (7)
22. A near mix-up – Wembley or O2?
24. Fold entreaty on square. (5)
25. Song for a drowned valley. (4)

FOR DECADES we came to regard tuberculosis (TB) as a killer disease of the past. But, as Dr Tim Smith explained at the club meeting in March, TB remains a potent cause of premature death in many parts of the world and, after a long period of decline, the incidence began to rise again in the UK in the early 1990s.

For hundreds of years until it was brought under control by antibiotics “people were terrified” of TB, said Dr Smith, with its mortality rate of fifty per cent. It was a disease characterised by fatigue, fever, shortness of breath, night sweats, loss of appetite, weight loss and a cough coupled with sputum production, bloodstained in the later stages.

From 1790 to 1850, TB accounted for one in four of all deaths in the UK. Between 1829 and 1835 it caused one in four of all babies in Manchester to be delivered stillborn. The mortality rate overall in the UK in 1860 was 300 per 100,000 of population. By 1952 the rate dropped to about ten per 100,000.

TB has featured prominently in art and culture, including in pictures by Edvard Munch, operas by Puccini (*La Bohème*) and Verdi (*La Traviata*) and poetry by Keats, who was trained in medicine and predicted his own death from the disease. More recently, it featured in *Angela's Ashes*, an Irish-American memoir made into an Oscar-nominated film in 1999.

The cause of TB was not known until 1865, when the French physician, Jean Antoine Villemin demonstrated that it was an infective disease. Before this, TB was attributed to divine punishment, immorality and other mystical causes.

TB hall of fame

They all died of tuberculosis:

- ◆ René Laennec
(physician, musician and inventor of the stethoscope)
- ◆ All six Brontë siblings
- ◆ John Keats
- ◆ Johann von Goethe
- ◆ Frederic Chopin
- ◆ Robert Louis Stevenson
- ◆ Anton Chekov
- ◆ Aubrey Beardsley
- ◆ Amedeo Modigliani
- ◆ D H Lawrence
- ◆ Franz Kafka
- ◆ George Orwell
- ◆ Muhammed Ali Jinnah
(founder of Pakistan)
- ◆ Eleanor Roosevelt
- ◆ Vivien Leigh

Tuberculosis

“The disease of the poor”

Treatments included bleeding, “cupping” (a form of suction), blistering”, “inhalation therapy”, “mesmerism”, “electrotherapy” and x-ray of the spleen. A range of invasive treatments was tried between 1894 and 1934. None of these provided a cure and in some cases the treatment was judged worse than the disease.

It was another 17 years, in 1882, before Robert Koch, the German physician and microbiologist demonstrated that TB was a bacterial infection. In 1905 Koch was awarded the Nobel prize in medicine for his work on TB.

There was no evidence that isolation in a sanatorium cured TB “but there was a popular feeling that it did”, said Dr Smith. Isolation helped stop in-family transmission and often led to improvements in diet. But it meant leaving the family, with no prospect of marriage or children. Before the antibiotic era 50 per cent of patients entering a sanatorium were dead within five years. The Reading and Oxford area was served by a large sanatorium at Peppard, founded in 1899 by Dr Esther Carling and closed only in 1982.

A vogue for “treatment at high altitude” began in the German town of Görbersdorf, now in Poland, where Dr Herman Brehmer opened a sanatorium in 1854. This was followed by growth of a sanatorium market in the Alps, including at Leysin in Switzerland (*poster page 2*).

Among treatments with demonstrable benefits was “moving to a warmer climate”, such as the French Riviera, “if you could afford it”, Dr Smith added. The Mundesley sanatorium in Norfolk, opened in 1899, was the first large centre in England built specifically for open-air treatment of tuberculosis.

TB is latent in one in four people and about ten per cent of these will go on to develop the disease. The BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) vaccine, for which many Probus members will have been tested in childhood, was developed in the 1920s. It was used to protect people with the latent condition and others in countries where TB was common; it has limited effect in preventing adult pulmonary TB. More recent interventions

include the Haef skin test, used in UK from 1950 to 2005 to determine whether the BCG was needed. Mass mobile screenings were begun in the 1950s and more effective drugs such as rifampicin were introduced in the 1960s.

A milestone was passed in 1944 when Albert Schatz and Selman Waksman isolated streptomycin, the drug used unsuccessfully on George Orwell. For his work on this Waksman received the Nobel prize in medicine in 1952. Schatz successfully sued Waksman for a share



In 1947 George Orwell was treated with the then new antibiotic, streptomycin, obtained from the USA by

“wire-pulling”, as Orwell recorded it in his journal. The price paid was “£1 a gram, plus 60 per cent purchase tax”, about £64 a gram in today’s money.

*But Orwell developed a severe allergic reaction and the treatment was stopped. He was then prescribed another antibiotic, para-amino-salicylic acid, or PAS. This, too, did not work and, after a further, attempt with streptomycin, Orwell gave up the fight and died in January 1950. He lived just long enough to see his masterpiece, **Nineteen Eighty-four** published to great acclaim.*

of the credit for and profits from streptomycin.

The spread of HIV / Aids and increasing drug resistance were the main reasons why the steady fall in TB mortality rates began to level off in the 1980s. TB is the immediate cause of death in most people who die of Aids. Today the incidence of TB is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa and Indonesia and drug resistance is greatest in South Africa, Russia and India. In 2017 TB was the world’s top infectious killer, with 1.6 million victims, including 300,000 with Aids. In September 2018 the United Nations made a commitment to end the global epidemic of TB by 2030. This presents no great threat in the UK “but is a major problem elsewhere in the world”, concluded Dr Smith. ◆