



Full programme for 2021

“South West USA—An Alternative Grand Circle” is the last talk of 2020, to be given at 10.30 on 9 December by Bernard Novell.

As is now the norm, it will be delivered by Zoom. The invitation to take part will arrive in your in-box a day or two before. Tune in early, at any time from 10.15. How-to-Zoom instructions are on the website. Feel free to wear a party hat and pyjama bottoms!

A full programme has been arranged by Andy Richards for 2021. Details are printed alongside the Chairman’s seasonal good wishes in the Christmas card enclosed. The Chairman has sent personal Christmas cards to the widows of deceased members.

Why we like to meet and talk

“Language is an art, like brewing or baking. It certainly is not a true instinct, for every language has to be learnt. It differs, however, widely from all ordinary arts, for man has an instinctive tendency to speak, as we see in the babble of our young children; whilst no child has an instinctive tendency to brew, bake, or write.”

Charles Darwin

The Descent of Man, 1871

Members booklet

The members booklet will be sent with the January edition of Probity.

Subscriptions 2021

The Committee has agreed that the club finances are good enough not to need to change the annual subscription rate of £40.

Membership vacancies

There are two vacancies. If you have a nomination please forward his name and email address to the Secretary.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be on 13 January at 10.30am. All committee members will stand for re-election.

“Battleships and how they were made”

The well-established heavy industry was “inefficient and dangerous” with “appalling” working conditions and labour relations, “and generally slow in thought and deed”.

It was with this withering description of Glasgow shipbuilding that Alasdair Milne introduced his talk on 14 October on “Battleships and how they were made”.

Alasdair (below) found himself in the shipyards when touring local engineering facilities to inform his production engineering course at Glasgow university. Much of the industrial inflexibility emanated from the Edwardian shipbuilding boom and, by the 1960s, it was all “on the way out”.



Nowadays, Alasdair said, that sort of world appears to be part of a “collective nostalgia” we see on TV and, more locally, as represented by places such as the GWR works in Swindon. It all became

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Driven To Drink submitted by Alan Matthews

Each lunchtime when I sit to dine
I enjoy a glass or two of wine
If appetite is on the wane
I soon revive it with **Champagne**
It's lamb today, so here we go
A bottle of a good **Bordeaux**
And there are times I have to thank
A glass of fine **Sauvignon Blanc**
But at any time of day

I can rely on **Montrachet**
When on game casserole I gorge
I try a glass of **Nuits Saint Georges**
And often need a little nap
After **Châteauneuf du Pape**
To keep my spirits riding high
There's always **Morgon Côte du Py**
And at night when I turn in
I sleep well on a **Damson Gin**



**Mystery member:
who
is he ?**

Mystery member number five was trained as an engineer but might easily be considered a frustrated classicist, or musician who's

not quite realised his potential.

He taught himself ancient Greek while commuting to London, confessed regret at not having taken Latin at A level and can be heard as a chorister in local choirs. He was definitely a “war baby”, however, born into a military family at our lowest ebb in world war two and, as an officer himself, witnessing the spooky realities of its “cold” successor; goings-on that most of us glimpse only second-hand through the pens of Cornwell and Deighton.

World war two and its after-effects were a formative influence. His father, a Royal Engineer officer, saw active service in Norway, northern Europe and Germany and, eventually, Palestine during the uprising. He was rarely at home! With father stationed abroad our mystery member was sent to boarding school in Westgate, Kent. This was “instrumental” in cultivating his interest in music. He sang unaccompanied during school services but accepts he is “not good enough” now to perform solo with his thriving, local “feelgood” choir. He sang in a barber’s shop ensemble in Singapore and, when stationed in Germany, with the *Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie*. His musical talent is as much nature as nurture. He was encouraged to learn piano by a grandmother, “a very good pianist” who was also a “leading light in Wigan music”. Following A levels in applied maths, pure maths and physics his own military career began as a Sandhurst cadet, followed by degree studies at Cambridge. It’s a lasting regret that he

did not do better at Cambridge, a blow to his self-esteem. Given an entirely free choice he might even have graduated in classics rather than engineering.

While serving in Singapore a bad mosquito bite followed by shivering and fever was dismissed by his Army MO as “no problem”, but the construction camp MO he later consulted in Thailand took a different view. He instantly diagnosed malaria and prescribed a cold shower. The episode was a blessing in disguise. “Benign tertiary” malaria, a non-recurring illness, turned out to be the cause. Convalescence gave our mystery member the opportunity to visit the Cameron Highlands in what was then Malaya. It was an outstandingly beautiful landscape in which you could find “tigers on the golf course” and a “unique range of exotic butterflies”.

In the course of duty, our mystery member met HM The Queen, Princess Anne and, more than once, Margaret Thatcher. He also got to know Sir Walter Marshall, former chairman of the CEBG and AERE and “Mrs Thatcher’s favourite nuclear power man” who was known in South Stoke for his generous hospitality to carol singers of all ages at his home.

Our mystery man also chanced to meet the KGB officer, Oleg Gordievsky who is said to have “changed the course of history” when, disillusioned with Communism, he became a double agent for Britain. He has colourful tales to tell of these encounters.

In retirement he relishes the “bleak months” of January to March. The absence of “garden needs” allows time to practise the watercolour skills he was inspired to learn by watching Singaporean master, Winston Oh at his easel. His choice of desert island reading would be *The Lord of the Rings*, “because the English appeals”. He recalls with affection that his English master had been taught by Tolkein, and Tolkein’s son had

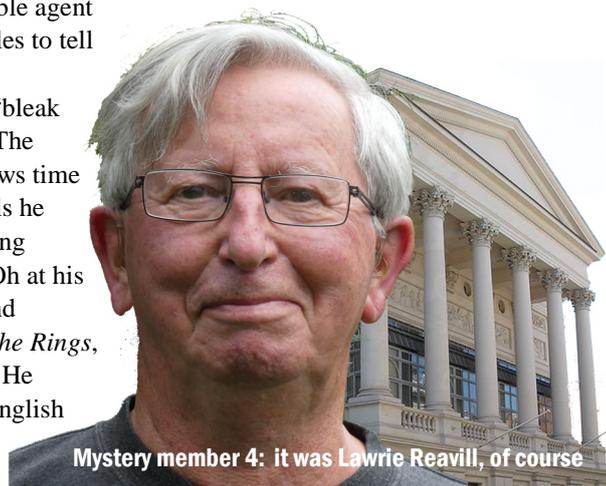
been one of this master’s classmates.

To the attentive observer, “discreet”, “devoted” and “divine” are epithets that seem to encapsulate his life so far, the last being resonant of his most esoteric hobby and a thread that runs through his taste in music. This is dominated by the works of the “class of 1685”: JS Bach, GF Handel and harpsichord maestro, Domenico Scarlatti, and of their near contemporaries, Telemann and Vivaldi. If he had only one disc on the island it would be Bach’s B Minor Mass. His luxury would have to be a CD player, preferably with a full collection of his favourite recordings.

Of the well-known people who’ve crossed his path, he reserves the greatest praise for Major-General Sir Fitzroy Maclean, who rose from the rank of private and is credited with founding the SAS. Maclean’s book *Eastern Approaches* is a “wonderful evocation of his gung-ho approach to life”.

“F sharp!” declaimed his grandmother as he practiced his youthful piano while she was relaxing. The crown on his epaulette, the “intelligence” of his calling and the breadth of his musical interests suggest “C major” would be a suitable sobriquet for mystery member number five. *Who is he?*

Look for the answer in the next Probity



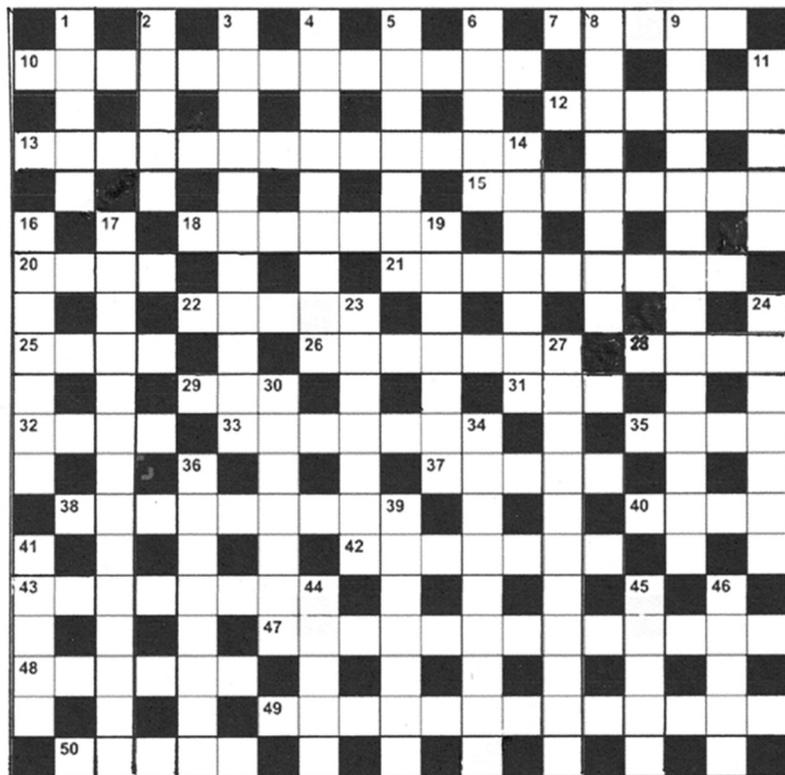
Mystery member 4: it was Lawrie Reavill, of course

XedsXmasXtravaganza!

It's Christmas, so your compiler will donate £25 to the winner's chosen charity.

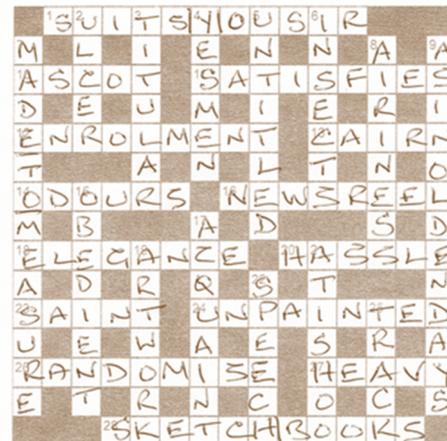
Closing date for entries Tuesday 5 January 2021

email your solution to:-
john@thegrays.myzen.co.uk



Name(s).....

Charity.....



Solution to XEDSXWORD #4
Winners Robin & Mary Carr

Across

- 7 & 12 ...but only 6 on 30th December? (5, 6)
10. Disliking Mama, crazy dairy workers. (5-1-7)
12. See 7a.
13. Swiss Magi moved nanometre northwest to be present
on day seven (5, 8)
15. Sea diets may be opposed by Western team. (8)
18. Celebrated revolutionaries east to west of Spain. (7)
20. Afterthought in A & E at east end of church. (4)
21. Understand Northern Irish connections with high
offices (9)
22. Score song back on street. (5)
25. Stagger back from lecherous look (4)
26. Father figure, a support given to bad actor. (7)
28. Element named otherwise? (4)
29. Current strength of one politician? (3)
31. Sharp cry from puppy I played with. (3)
32. Off-line waterway (4)
33. It may be anile to show high spirits. (7)
35. How do you say "cheers" in Swedish - ask Olaf! (4)
37. One up for performer's list of requirements. (5)
38. Ian Tandie brewed refreshment (6,3)
40. Organs sound positive. (4)
42. Hauls home cross-dressed wrong? (5,2)
43. I'm heard yelling for dessert. (3,5)
47. Carollers tore up exciting ride! (13)
48. Did he evolve theory in N. Australia? (6)
49. Coating around new solid, thus strengthening. (13)
50. 500 common wigs in stock at Pharmacy? (5)

Down

1. In a way, he may be called Jehovah. (5)
2. Aircraft recognition established from one dimple. (5)
3. "Hand me the clock", I might say (with no right) to
avoid boredom (4,3,4)
4. Disturbed New Zealander takes exercise with help,
backed by digital almanac (9)
5. Deprived member taken in when ball hit high. (7)
6. Article Nine may be idiotic (5)
8. "Exercising high influence" as Alex Tate might
have it (8)
9. U.S tanker drivers are self-destructive riders (7,7)
11. Consent in principle to meet a Green Party MP (5)
14. Deny profits for ever, in short (7)
- 16 & 41 Seasonal quartet of flighty types with
vocation. (7,5)
17. Witches' mistake? Yes! (1,8,5)
19. Spreader puts lid back on a hill. (7)
23. Touching to see confusion at debut. (7)
24. Audibly worship lazy lookers. (7)
27. Can dormice rise to such a perch? (11)
30. Sole position for tea grower on radio. (7)
34. Lynda Rigg produced meagre turnover. (9)
36. Listen! Look closely and make a song penetrating (8)
39. Without weapons, Eastender cannot hurt you. (7)
41. See 16d.
44. Car for Doctor on the rise. (5)
45. Nothing lost; it's too much anyway. (2,1,1,1)
46. Comic? That'll receive a negative response! (5)

Battleships from page 1

tinged with thoughts of a “golden age”, with low unemployment and so forth, that surfaced in the Brexit debate.

Explaining the theme of his talk, Alastair said the Glasgow he saw had been the only place in the UK where everything required for the battleship except its electrical kit and explosives had been provided locally.

This resulted from the investment made to meet the armaments race that presaged the first world war. By 1910 Glasgow had three battleship building yards, “a large part of the country’s naval gun making capability” and all the infrastructure to support it.

In the 1920s and ‘30s there had been almost no new investment and the yards remained as they were “for me to see in 1960”. From a work point of view he vowed never to go near these industries in future.

The Admiralty response to the battleship race had been to produce the “definitive”

class of ship, including the Queen Elizabeth class, of which five were built, *HMS Barham* and *HMS Valiant* in Glasgow. They each had eight fifteen-inch guns, twelve six-inch guns and two anti-aircraft guns. They were completely oil fuelled and, with a speed of 25 knots, which was faster than the Germans’, were rated as battle cruisers. They were armoured to protect against their own shells at more than 500 yards and the Germans had smaller guns and shells.

The design concept proved durable. One derivative, *HMS Vanguard*, completed in 1946, continued in service until decommissioned in 1956.

Alasdair described in often grim detail the tensions and compressions a ship’s decks are designed to withstand at sea; the rolling and bending of ingots into of steel plate; the assembly and operation of turrets and guns; the construction of hull frames, often from full-size timber templates; the punching, drilling, riveting and welding of plates; the forging,

casting, machining and annealing components, including gun barrels (117 miles of wire were used in a twelve-inch, wire-wound gun) and the propulsion systems (each battleship had four propeller shafts).

In summary, a battleship consisted of one-third its armour, one third its propulsion machinery and one-third its cargo, including turrets and guns. Owing to its complexity, construction of the hull involved eight-to-nine million man-hours, compared with 400,000 man-hours for a merchant ship, and the vessel was paid for by the ton, with a profit margin of ten per cent. The Admiralty inspector sat doing detailed design work in the ship as it was being built.

One of the few remnants of Glasgow’s shipbuilding heritage is a hammer-head crane (picture page 2) at the site of John Brown’s yard, now a tourist attraction with a café on the top. *You can watch the full presentation by logging in to the members’ page of the Probus website.* ♦

We have no way of knowing whether Jenny Mallin’s five generations of Anglo-Indian ancestors actually enjoyed a Vindaloo on their verandah. But it’s entirely possible, given the nature of their accommodation and the uniquely comprehensive cookbook Jenny inherited from four-times great-grandmother, Wilhelmina, born 1828, and her later great-grandmothers.

The family settled in Bangalore at the turn of the 18th century and remained in various parts of India until Jenny’s parents left for Britain in 1953, “after partition”.

In a well-attended talk delivered by Zoom on 12 August Jenny described, using family photographs and scanned recipes, how a 170-year old recipe book had been handed down and expanded by five generations of her family. The talk was an etymological feast. These are some of the fascinating things we digested.

The traditional name of Madras, the modern city of Chennai, is probably derived from the Portuguese “Madre de Deus”, or Mother of God. Vindaloo has similar origins, being derived from the Portuguese for “meat in garlic wine marinade”, a dish popular in the former Portuguese colony of Goa, near Bombay. Sorry, Mumbai.

Mulligatawny soup comes from the Tamil words, *milagu* (pepper) and *tanni* (water). That tastes about right. *Bhaji* means “scrambled” and kedgeree, the posh hotel breakfast option, takes its

Vindaloo on the verandah Memsahib?

name from the Hindu, *kitcheri*, meaning “jumbled up”. They sound about right. *Jalfrezi* comes from a Bengali word for “spicy food” and an Urdu/Persian word meaning “suitable for a diet”. That feels about right.

Edam was the world’s most popular cheese for 400 years until the nineteenth century. The cylinders used by the Dutch for its passage to India were widely reused, cut in half longways to make a *pollum*, a dish hung from scales to weigh goods in. It evolved to become a convenient measure of ingredients and appears frequently in family recipes.

India has been a rich source of English vocabulary; bungalow, pyjamas, mufti and khaki, for instance. And, of course, verandah. To the Mallin ancestors the verandah was their “window to the community”. Another, *Memsahib* translates as “madam-boss”, the person responsible for running the colonial household. Families had 12-20 servants, each with his or her distinct job.

The domestic payroll could include any of these: *Bawarchi* (cook), *Khansamah* (butler or steward), *Khidmatgar* (bearer), *Chaprasi* (messenger and “main source of gossip”), *Ayah* (usually a widow, who looked after babies), *Punkah Wallah* (who worked the cooling fan), *Hajjam* (barber), *Chokra Boy* (child servant, with sundry cleaning duties), *Bhisti* (water

carrier), *Jawan* (polisher, of shoes, etc), *Mali* (gardener), *Durwan* (night watchman) and *Dhoby Wallah* (laundryman). In addition, the cleaning of bathrooms and toilets was done by *Untouchables*, *Matrani* and *Jemader*. The tailor, or *Darzi*, came to the bungalow when needed, maybe for wedding preparations, and stayed until all outfits were made. The milkman arrived with his cow, milked it on the spot and was supervised in case he diluted the milk with water.

Jenny’s grandmother had a “mixture” of Hindu and Muslim servants, as well as some Goans, who were Roman Catholic.

She had to be careful about who was asked to do what. Muslims would not serve alcohol, Hindus beef and fish. For equally religious reasons, Jains would not make curries with onions or garlic.

There was a “strong bond” between the Memsahib and the servants, who all lived in the “very large” compound. Servants were often considered part of the family and featured in family photographs. The kitchen and laundry were also in the compound, some distance from the main house, “to keep smelly smoke well away”.

Discovery of Wilhelmina’s manuscript inspired Jenny to write *A Grandmother’s Legacy*, which is laced with intimate family stories, to perpetuate recipes used by the families and their servants. In 2017 it was declared “Best World Cookbook” by the Gourmand World Cookbook Society. ♦