



We'll meet again—on 14 July

Yes, it looks like we'll be able to meet again face-to-face on 14 July. With our traditional venue out of bounds for the foreseeable future the committee has agreed, after a painstaking search, to move to the Shillingford Bridge hotel.

Arrangements will as far as possible return to those familiar before the pandemic and lockdown, with coffee on arrival and lunch available by advanced booking. Parking is free but to avoid a fine you must register your car at the hotel reception on arrival. It is hoped and assumed that you

will want to share transport where possible.

Full details will be circulated well in advance by the Hon Secretary.

The Chairman and committee look forward especially to welcoming those of you who've been unable to join in the virtual meetings over the past year.



Cautionary sting in



bees tale

Wasps have an acid sting, a bee's is alkaline. Anaphylaxis can be caused by a single sting from either. It is a medical emergency that requires immediate treatment.

If you are exposing yourself to bees as a hobby keep an EpiPen® with you and make sure it's in date. This was one of several key lessons to emerge from a fascinating and comprehensive talk by Roger Wood on 10 March. It was the best attended virtual meeting so far, the 48 people present including at least five guests from neighbouring clubs.

Roger, "just an enthusiastic amateur" beekeeper, told us stoically of his lucky escape when tending hives in Gatehampton.

The first hive went well. When he opened the second the bees "got very upset with me". Roger became "literally" covered in bees. He had to retreat, shaking them off and getting



Mystery member: who is he ?

“Everyone” of a certain age thinks he knows the late Robert Maxwell was a bully. Mystery member eight is probably unique among us in occupying a national role that obliged him

to witness Maxwell’s arrogance at first hand. As we’ll see, it was not a one-off.

Our mystery member has made his home in Goring and Streatley twice. The first time was in 1965, to have a threshold over which to carry his new bride. The second, in 2001, was a return to the beloved areas of outstanding natural beauty he was compelled to leave for twenty years by family duty.

“I’ve always worked in London”, he explained. Having shown keenness for art at school, he was offered a job “doing all sorts of work” on the advertising side of a south London newspaper.

It launched him on an influential career in communications and advertising administration, culminating in control of the second biggest advertising budget in the land.

An invitation to the Royal Aircraft Show at Farnborough was his “thrilling” reward for publicity work on a Royal Navy submarine launch. He had entered a new world. “Nowhere else comes close to the excitement of seeing the amazing range of military equipment displayed and nations represented.” Surrounded by strangers, he relied on a guide book to identify the many “mysterious visitors in dark glasses”.

It was a time when the Thatcher government’s spin machine was using press influence to overcome weaknesses in various public subsidy schemes. His reputation for sound judgment went before him. When problems reached the ear of Bernard Ingham, the prime minister’s press secretary, Ingham’s first instinct was to send for our mystery member to “sort things out”. In the new year’s honours 1995 he was appointed OBE “for services to Her Majesty’s Government”.

In retirement, our mystery member was plunged, as the *éminence grise* of his trade, into five years of *pro bono* work devising a code of practice for improving relationships between advertising agencies and their clients.

He’s now a keen student of local history and font of information about pillars of local society, including GPs, Lancelot Bourdillon and Roger Dixey.

Bourdillon, he noted in a 2017 essay, was awarded the DSO, MC and Bar and the *Croix de Guerre* and was mentioned in despatches six times during the first world war. As a fourth-year medical student at the end of the second, Dixey was sent to Germany “to help clean up the Belsen concentration camp”.

But for our mystery member’s delving we might never have known about Frederick Thomas Schoolbred, “draper, golfer and benefactor” who expanded Thames Bank into a thirteen-bedroom mansion and, unusually, travelled between Brighton, London and Goring by private train.

Schoolbred built a rival golf course at Warren Farm when, as a man “in trade”, he was denied membership of the original course he had paid to have redesigned.

From mystery member eight we learn that Smallbones once offered an up-market funeral service; that, in preparation for world war two, they constructed many of the concrete pillboxes that populate local river banks and main roads and that during the war they had tradesmen billeted in London, on permanent standby to repair the preceding night’s blitz damage.

An Open University graduate in architecture and design, our mystery member led guided walking tours of local landmarks for the Gap festival, including several of Streatley “from the Swan to the Bull and back again”.

“It was no easy task making myself heard by ten people on narrow pavements against a background of intense traffic noise”, he admits.

Our mystery member served ten years as chairman of a local charity, helping raise £150,000 for its needs and leaving a permanent legacy we can all enjoy.

One of his few regrets is “not buying shares in Sky TV when it launched”. He has a soft spot for black and white movies, such as his favourite, *Casablanca*. He values good table manners but resents having to wear a face mask. His ambition is “reaching my 90th birthday”.

He’s often crossed paths with the famous. He found himself chatting with a favourite author, Evelyn Waugh, while spending summer holidays at Porlock Weir. The acerbic Waugh was “not pleased when not served quickly” at the local pub, where he had his own special chair. “I wanted to talk about his books but he did not.”

The volume our mystery member wants for his desert island is *Never*

The world in your pocket

Command module pilot, Michael Collins, the astronaut who stayed on board Apollo 11 during the first Moon landing in July 1969, died last month. He was the last survivor of the crew of three.

The modern mobile phone has roughly seven million times as much memory and 100,000 times as much processing power as the guidance computer on board Apollo.

Again – Britain 1945-51 by Peter Hennessy. “It’s the best account I’ve read on the Attlee government. It made me realise what a desperate financial state the country was in after the war.” As a bonus he’d like *Notes from a Small Island* by Bill Bryson, who “has a lovely sense of humour”.

He has no favourite disc and expects no luxury. But he’s partial to “any fish except mussels and scallops – but not fried”, so should be well served in his maritime environment.

Every year at the peak of his career our mystery member led a team which received advertising sales pitches from national newspapers. This is where Robert Maxwell was at his worst. Our mystery member “hated” the way the boorish Mirror boss treated his staff. “I felt sorry for his people. They did their best to impress while he did his utmost to undermine them.”

Expressing sentiments familiar to many, mystery member eight declared Maxwell “the most infamous person I ever met”. Who is this mystery member?

Look for the answer in the next Probity



Flight engineer Peter Jerram was mystery member seven

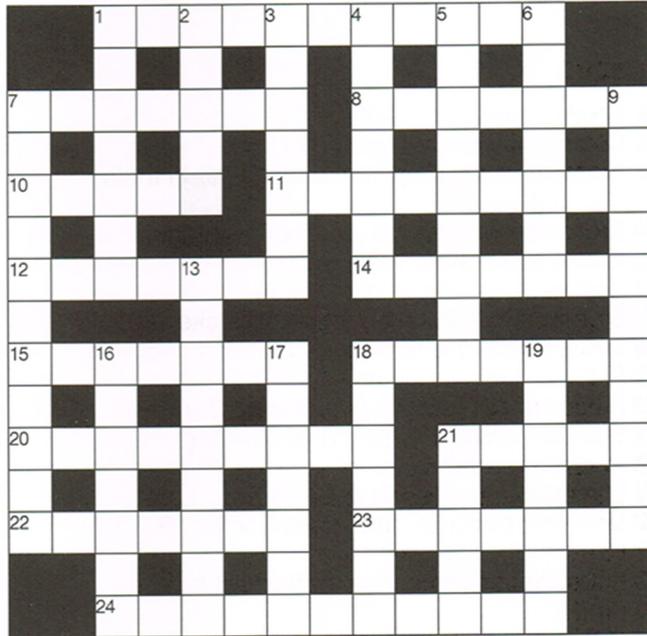
XEDSXWORD No. 7

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

Closing date 31st May 2021

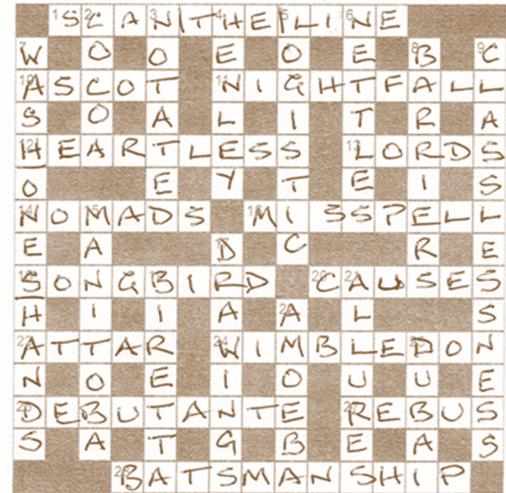
N.B. Send your entries to John Gray,
john@thegrays.myzen.co.uk

or
 13 Holmlea Road



Name(s).....

Charity.....



Solution to XEDSXWORD No 6

Congratulations to the winner

John Spokes

Across

1. Peaceful and happy spell, the time spent with royal angler? (7,4)
7. Writer in spherical enclosure. (7)
8. Casually and lacking aspiration, my wife and I seem to wander (7)
10. Bill the French for furniture. (5)
11. We read Addison and Steele were trial beginners. (9)
12. Frenchman gives voice (but is hard to understand). (7)
14. Joins forces to measure inclines. (7)
15. Powerful reaction to traditional family structure. (7)
18. Across in Ireland, the composer may be seen - on the steak menu? (7)
20. Courtesy title given to Ms Blackman, if in charge. (9)
21. Almost heard Hawaiian greeting near Stirling? (5)
22. Could woollen manufacturer make one crisp? (7)
23. Head off headache for Arthur's mum. (7)
24. Domestic preparation of Hickman Diet. (7-4)

Down

1. For a serving of fish (and chips withal) I butter some bread. (7)
2. Latin recess may pass into disuse. (5)
3. Do colonials face such long odds? (7)
4. Greeting, as Smetana re-scored it. (7)
5. Small, airy sort of lily. (9)
6. Is Sad Street the birthplace of perverse pleasure-seekers? (7)
7. Crazy guy's joint shows skill increase. (11)
9. Ate citrus in order to revive. (11)
13. Looks correct order on the parade ground. (4,5)
16. Singer Harry, junior prisoner on roof of jail. (7)
17. Quiet! Wacky baccy can invigorate! (7)
18. Disturbance in court? Yes! (7)
19. Apparently, I will turn to benefit of someone, at least (3,4)
21. Hallways of the heart. (5)

"There is no single defence against this threat. Instead we must treat it as if it were a chronic disease, being constantly alert to the early symptoms and ready to employ, rapidly, a combination of treatments." This comment was made not about Covid-19 but in 1997 by W S Cohen, the USA defence secretary, about biowarfare and, in particular, potential bioweapons such as anthrax and smallpox.

Dr Snell's subject was biowarfare and bioterrorism. **Bioweapons**, he said, are living organisms, or infected material derived from them, which are used for hostile purposes and intended to cause disease in man, animals or plants. Their effects depend on the ability to multiply in their host. **Biowarfare** is the use of bioweapons by nation states. **Bioterrorism** is their use by terrorist groups.

There's a long history of biowarfare. People in ancient Vanuatu tipped arrows with tetanus. In the fourteenth century the French catapulted contaminated dead animals at their English foes in a castle south of Calais.

Biowarfare was not a monopoly of the bad boys. British soldiers gave smallpox-infected blankets to Delaware Indians in 1763.

In discussing world war one and its after-effects Dr Snell said Germany "and probably

"No single defence"

also France" attempted to spread anthrax to opponents' horses.

A Polish resolution prohibiting bacteriological warfare was added to the Geneva convention in 1925.

The UK's biowarfare committee was established in 1936. By then Hungary, Italy and Poland also had biowarfare programmes. Hitler bucked the trend with a world war two veto on development of bioweapons.

British bioweapons research was initiated in 1940 at Porton Down. By 1942 an anthrax bomb was tested successfully on sheep on Gruinard island, a mile off the west coast of Scotland. The government spent millions on decontamination before selling the island for £500 to the original owners in 1990.

The UK Public Health Laboratory Service was set up in 1947 to counter perceived threats of germ warfare. The USA spent \$750m on its biowarfare programme before it was ended by president Nixon in the 1960s.

A 1972 convention prohibited acquisition of bioweapons, including toxins, but its success was limited. Thus, the Soviet biowarfare programme was rejuvenated in the 1970s.

Bioterrorism came to public attention in 1984 with the infection of salad bars in the USA, causing 750 cases of food poisoning. The 1995 Tokyo subway sarin attack caused twelve deaths. Sarin is a nerve agent, like Novichok, used in the Salisbury poisoning.

Current threats are from reduced herd immunity to smallpox, from anthrax and "new" viruses such as Ebola and coronaviruses, which might be genetically-modified in the laboratory. Threats also come from possible sabotage of food and water supplies.

Dr Snell gave reason for hope. Responsible governments have increased spending on research into vaccines, diagnostics and therapies and have developed stockpiles of vaccines and antidotes. In the wake of the Russian poisonings in Salisbury the UK announced its troops would be vaccinated against potential anthrax attacks.

Bioweapons are "easy" to obtain but effective delivery is difficult. New vaccines have been developed, such as against Ebola, in ever shorter lead-times. There is better protection through intelligence, with novel detection systems and new treatments under study. *"But there's no single defence."*

You can see Dr Snell's presentation in full on the Probus website.

Bee sting

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stung all the time.

He reassembled the hive and was covered with bees again. They were stinging his neck, having got inside his veil, and were down his Wellingtons. It was "very uncomfortable", he said, but managed to get the hive together and shake off the bees again.

He took a couple of antihistamine tablets, drove home and decided he "didn't feel very well". He collapsed at Goring surgery reception desk. The team called an ambulance and the next Roger recalled was being rushed to the Royal Berks hospital, having been given adrenaline, some steroids and "various other things" at the surgery.

Roger considered himself very unlucky "but survived, thank goodness". He sold all his bees and is now half-way through a three-year immunisation course.

The lessons he passed on were (1) make sure someone knows where you are (he hadn't told his wife, Jenny he was going to the hives); (2) taking antihistamines "is a good thing" and (3) carry an EpiPen to dose yourself with adrenaline to overcome the effects of the shock. Reflecting his own oversight, he stressed the need to check your beekeeper's veil for holes that might let bees in.

Bumble bees, Roger explained, emerge

from hibernation when temperatures reach about five degrees Celsius, earlier than honey bees, which need ten degrees or higher.

The queen honey bee lives typically for two or three years but no more than five. In winter a colony will have one queen and about 10,000 workers. This rises to 60,000 at the peak, in August. Worker bees forage for nectar and pollen. In summer they live for 42-56 days, until their wings wear out and they die in the field. In winter a worker will survive in the hive for six months.

Bees swarm if the nest becomes overcrowded. If you see a swarm notify a beekeeping society who will be glad to collect it because a colony of 10,000 workers can cost £200.

Male honey bees (drones) are bigger, longer and fatter than workers and have no sting. A drone can fertilise many queens from different hives. Drones are killed off by the females. Bees leave the hive to defecate and find water. To avoid disorientating bees a hive should be moved "within three feet or more than three miles".

Beekeeping is classed as food production and regulated in the UK by Defra, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. A farmer may sometimes pay a keeper to park his or her hives on the farm to help fertilise crops.

Honey is harvested twice a year and Roger collected 60lbs of honey from each hive in his first year. "It's important to leave some behind to feed the bees!" he added.

We are all advised to grow flowers, including wild flowers, to help bees gather nectar and pollen. The best cultivated plants include salvia, cornflower, buddleia, lavender, geranium, globe thistle, aquilegia, chives, borage, flowering currants and poppies.

Common threats to the hive come from mice, which can eat both the honey and the honeycomb frame; wasps, which are deterred by guard bees; woodpeckers that cut into the hive structure; varroa mites which are parasitic on bees; wax moths that destroy the cells and some synthetic pesticides that are toxic to bees.

A growing threat is from the Asian giant hornet, first spotted in the UK in 2016. This has no natural predator and any sighting of it should be reported to the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology at Wallingford.

Reflecting our dependence on the creature as a pollinator, Roger concluded with a quotation from Albert Einstein: "If the bee disappeared off the face of the earth, man would only have four years left to live".

You can see Roger's presentation in full on the Probus website.