



Probus Club Ellesmere



Covid-19 Lockdown 2021 Newsletter

Issue 34

March 11, 2021

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From the Editor

Dear all,

I hope you are all keeping well, it's been a good couple of weeks to get in the garden, with some lovely bright days, if a little cold still. The kids started back to school this week, let's hope it doesn't cause too great a rise in the infection levels, which may delay our route out of lockdown.

I am still open for items to be published in the newsletter, all contributions welcomed.

Best wishes

Paul

Speaker's Corner

At our next Probus Zoom meeting on Thursday 18th March at 10.30am will be Laura Kavanagh-Jones speaking to us about 'Shropshire Fire Service'.

If you have not yet been able to join us at a Zoom meeting (a relatively simple type of on-line video conferencing) and need any help or advice do let me know and I will talk you through the process.



View from the Crow's Nest

Another fortnight has disappeared into the ether, I hope that you are keeping safe and as well as possible. The garden is bursting into life and our small pond is heaving with paired-up frogs spawning madly. For those of us with grandchildren it is a great relief to see them drifting back to school for that social engagement which is so important for mental health and honing social skills for the future.



Anyone can hold the helm when the sea
is calm

We are delighted to welcome another new member, Revd John Vernon who will be known to many of us already. A number of guests are invited to our Zoom meetings to have a 'taster' of what our club is all about and enjoy the speakers. Please encourage any of your friends to do the same if they would like to - you will just need to let Paul have their email address so that he can send them the Zoom invitation. Feel free to send your friends a link to our excellent Probus website meantime. We have all come to appreciate each other's company perhaps more than ever since the introduction of the Covid-19 restrictions and our thanks to everyone who is helping support each other. To those of our members who are living with ongoing health issues we send particular best wishes and

invite you to seek help from any members if you are stuck.

It continues to be frustrating to not be able to meet together but feedback from our fortnightly Newsletters and Zoom sessions is very encouraging albeit a necessary 'second-best'.

I will be handing over the President's 'chain of office' to Bill Ferries, our vice-President, officially in April and we will use that opportunity to publicise Ellesmere Probus in the local press.

My personal thanks to everyone, particularly our Committee members for their support and encouragement over the unusual 18-month term which has been thoroughly enjoyable despite the challenges to us all. I remain sad though over those of our members who have passed away meantime and our thoughts remain with their families.

So as April Fool's Day approaches along with a new financial year on 6th April let's hope we all have a smoother rest of the year.

Probus wouldn't exist without it's members, that's you!

As ever, best wishes and stay safe,

Jeremy

Speaker: RAF Shawbury - Secret flights of Aries, Warrant Officer Nick Williams via Zoom.

WO Nick Williams then gave his presentation on 'The Aries Project':

RAF Shawbury has been an airfield since 1917. It was closed in 1920 and reverted to farmland until the 1930's when the growing threat from Nazi Germany led to an expansion of RAF airfields. In Spring 1937 reconstruction began and the grass runway was replaced by a concrete one in 1941. In 1941 fewer than 5% of falling bombs were within 5 miles of the target area, forcing a need for more accurate navigation and targeting. Navigational aids commissioned by Bomber Command in 1943 were not felt fit for flying over extreme climates including to the Pacific. Radar was becoming a significant new asset to complement the 'astrograph' and 'integrated sextant'.

In 1944 after VE-Day Britain committed to helping the USA defeat Japan. This meant long-distance flights through varying climates needing accurate navigation. In March that year the Central Navigation School responsible for all Navigator Instructor training relocated from Cranage to Shawbury, bringing 42 Vickers Wellingtons, 4 Short Stirlings, a Proctor, Magister and Hudson to Shropshire. The Stirling was considered the best aircraft to undertake experimental navigation and a trial mission to Ireland from Shawbury resulted in engine problems with all but the captain baling out, eventually landing at RAF Kesh. Trials continued including to Vancouver Island and back. A longer-range aircraft was needed and a brand new Lancaster Mk1 took on the role, named the 'Aries'. In 1944 from Shawbury, Wg Cdr McKinley flew a secret flight of the first British aircraft round the world. It was unarmed and flew over enemy territory equipped with over a ton of the latest navigational equipment, 36,000 nautical miles over 53 days during which time 400 lectures and demonstrations were given to her 4000 appropriate people.

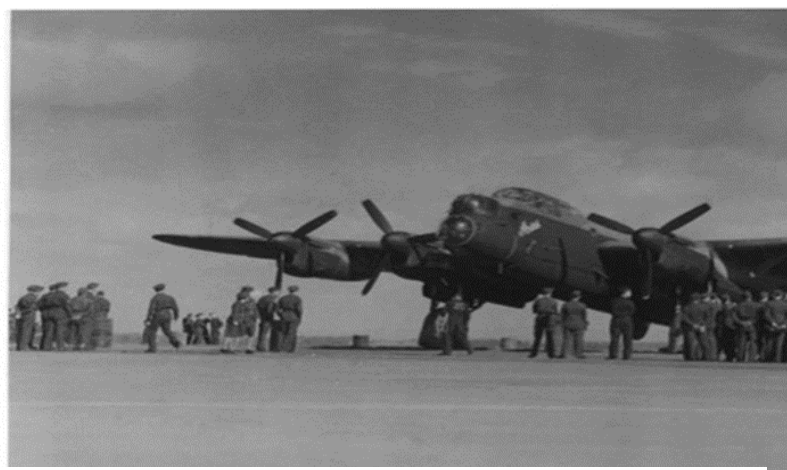
Three non-stop flying records were broken on these trips and the official world record time from Australia to UK was broken by more than 50 hours. On return it was modified to include fuel tanks of 4,000 gallons giving a range of 5,000 miles. A flight in May 1945 took them over the North Pole with 11 magnetic compasses distributed evenly through the plane. Ten crew, 19 hours flight and temperatures outside of -30 degrees. The crew were presented with 'Blue-Nose Certificates' by the CO of RAF Reykjavik for their endurance over the Arctic Circle.

In 1946 Aries flew from RAF Thornbury to Cape Town in just over 32 hours. There were various 'incarnations' of Aries over those years. It was eventually scrapped but the name on the nose was preserved and is now proudly displayed at RAF Shawbury in the 'Aries Club' where personnel of all ranks gather and socialise. The original Aries was replaced by a Lincoln MK2 in 1946 and then a Lincoln RE367 in 1948, making many long-distance flights over the North Pole. Then a Canberra B2 took the name Aries in 1953, the first British jet to fly over the North Pole. The last Aries was a Canberra PR7 which flew from London to New York and return in 17 hours 42 minutes.

Nowadays Aries is recognised at RAF Shawbury as the 'Awards for Innovation Excellence and Service' for those military and civilian personnel who have made a significant contribution to RAF Shawbury and the community, remembering the original service personnel on the war-time and post-war project.

There is no doubt that the series of record-breaking Aries flights from RAF Shawbury contributed to the modern navigational aids used today, militarily and commercially.

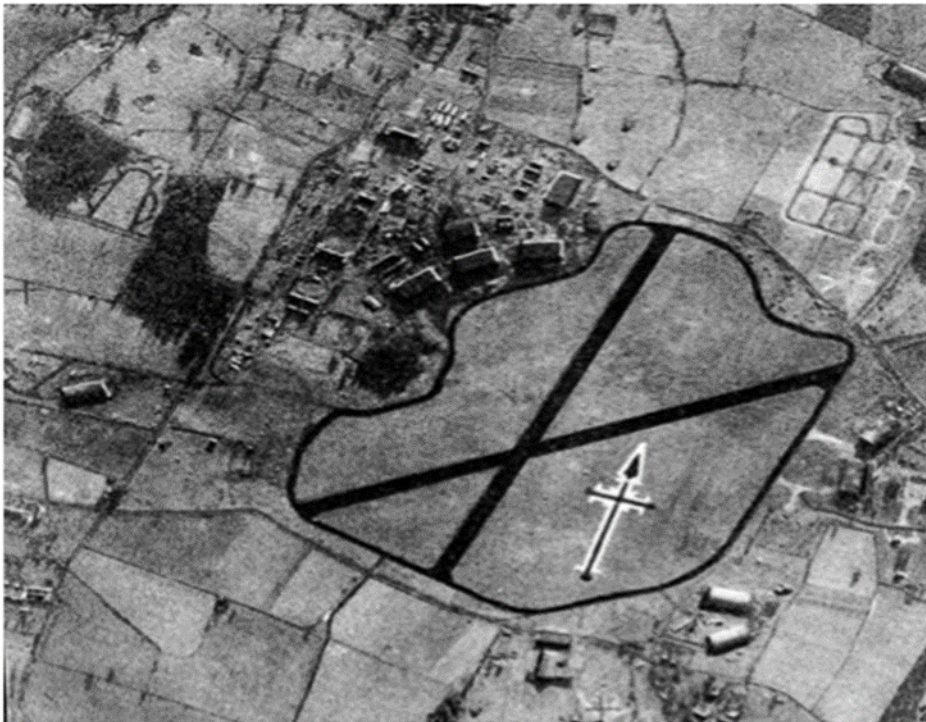
Nick's talk triggered a wide-ranging set of questions from the members and guests covering his talk linking interest in RAF Shawbury and wider which Nick gave informative replies to. There were 35 people present on the Zoom call.



Photos of Aries

RAF Shawbury

Route of Aries



A photo of a Snow Moon taken in the past month by member David Atkinson

Snow Moon



DA 22.00 26-02-21

Our years of motoring: Part 8 by Brian Rodgers

After arriving in UK I started working in an office in Surrey. One or two staff members belonged to motor clubs and one persuaded me to join the Guildford Car Club. I remember marshalling on a forestry stage of the RAC Rally but, in my 18 months in UK, that was the only contact I had with motor sport. New house, king size mortgage and three young children kept me from becoming more involved in any way.

Eventually, we decided that we should return to either the Arab world or to somewhere in Africa. I was interviewed in UK for a job with a construction company in Zambia and off we went. The MD had said at the interview that he was purchasing a new Mercedes 200D for himself and that I would have his very good, slightly older model. There was obviously considerable difference in our views as to the description of that car. It was a 190D Fintail with well over ¼ m miles on the clock. Even in warm weather, the glow plugs had to be used for at least **sixty** seconds before the engine would fire and then the performance! Perhaps I should say lack of. I'm sure that 0 – 60 must have taken **sixty** seconds and maximum speed seemed to be not much more than **sixty**. Its performance was not helped when, on one occasion, the split cotters on a valve stem parted company and a valve dropped on to the top of a piston. However, with the low engine rpm and vertical valves, no real damage was done. We lived with that car for several months and then, after numerous complaints from me, the Mercedes was taken away and I was given an Isuzu pick-up. At least that went but it was too small for the family and we had to buy a car for my wife. A friend found a well used VW 1600 Variant and we bought that. (More anon)

After a year with that employer, I left to join a larger construction company, owned by the Lonrho group. Since I was then bush based, my first vehicle was a Toyota Hi Lux, not the large 4x4 that one sees Britain nowadays, but a small 1600 petrol 4x2 utility. That was an excellent little car but I did not keep it for long and it was replaced by the bigger Toyota Stout. I liked that strong 4x2 and would have kept it longer, but I loaned it to a fellow member of staff and he rolled it, writing it off in the process. It was replaced by a Datsun LWB pick up, one of the hardest working cars that I remember. All three cars served me very well but, after 18 months in the bush, I was transferred into town, and I was given a BMW 1800 briefly, and then a Fiat 124 Estate. Those Fiats, although locally assembled, were good cars and I had that one until I departed from the company.

Meanwhile, we had to go on Christmas leave to visit my family on the other side of the Zambezi River, in Rhodesia. We were not permitted to drive company vehicles out of the country, hence we took Shirley's VW for Christmas '71. At the time I was still working deep in the Zambian bush, and I knew that we would have a very tight schedule on our departure date, because we were unlikely to leave before about 3.00 pm for the 400 mile journey. However, that should have enabled us to reach the border easily before it closed at 10.00 pm. I knew that the Variant used a lot of oil and before we left, I bought a gallon to take with us, confident that that would be enough for our journey. Inevitably, I was late in getting away from the work site but we managed to leave home by about 4.00pm. The run down to the capital, Lusaka, was uneventful and we passed through at about 7.00pm. We did stop off to top up fuel and when I checked, I was concerned to see that the engine had used much more oil than I had anticipated. However, we carried on and had reached the top of the northern, Zambian, escarpment of the Zambezi Valley, shortly before 8.00 pm. The run down the escarpment started well but on the last hairpin before the bottom, as I changed down, there was a very loud grinding noise from the back of the car and, when I declutched, the engine stopped completely. I was able to freewheel on to the verge off the road, where the car came to a standstill. A turn on the ignition key and I knew immediately that the engine had seized.

What to do? We were in very heavy forest (not bush) country on a very dark night in a broken down vehicle with my wife and three small children. No mobile telephones then to call for help. In those days both sides of the Valley were full of terrorists and, additionally, large numbers of elephant roamed the area. After about 15 minutes I heard a car coming down the hill and I stood out on the road and waved it down, but it did not stop.

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There had been too many cases of passing cars stopping for people waving them down and then terrorists armed with AK47s coming out of the forest. My mouth was very dry now as I tried to reassure my wife and the children. Then, Mannah from Heaven, I heard a heavy truck coming uphill. It was a large Leyland with double trailer. The very helpful local driver stopped and assured me that he would be meeting a south bound company truck at the top of the escarpment and, when handing over immigration documents to the other driver, he would ask him to stop to help us. I was a bit sceptical about that but all I could do was wait.

That wait for the other truck seemed to be one of the longest I have ever had but the two drivers were as good as their word. The southbound truck arrived and stopped in front of me and, in no time at all, I was hitched up to his second trailer (the dangler, as they were called there). The driver apologised for having to travel fast but he said that he had to make the border before it closed at 10.00. That was a frightening drive, if ever I had one. With no engine, I was unable to charge the battery hence I could not use the headlights and I was forced to use side lights only. On the end of a 20' tow rope and at 40 mph that was no joke. However, we managed the 20 odd miles without incident and reached the bridge and the border control beyond it, before they closed. No problem with immigration or customs but the police refused to allow us to proceed on tow. As the inspector said, on the drive up the southern Rhodesian escarpment, particularly on the hairpins, we would be sitting ducks for any Kaleshnikov toting terrorists. There was no argument and the truck towed us to the local hotel, a few hundred yards from the border post, and left us there. Unfortunately, the hotel was already closed for the night and no amount of hammering on the door brought any response. As with everyone in the Valley in those days, the hoteliers were extremely security conscious at night and the doors remained locked until daylight.

After a most uncomfortable night in the car with windows closed to keep out mosquitoes but with no ventilation in the very steamy environment, we were awake at about 5 and tried the hotel. Still no response. I walked back to the border post to ask to use their phone but was told that it was only a local line. The officer on duty suggested I walk to the police post approximately one mile along the road. That was a very scary walk. What the sounds from the forest were I did not know, other than they were very frightening. At the police post I was able to phone my father. The walk back to the car in the now early daylight was no problem and I found the hotel doors open. The manager was very apologetic and we had a clean up followed by breakfast.

My father arrived late morning and hitched the Variant behind his Volvo 122. He towed me to the bottom of the escarpment, where I parked up, while he took Shirley and children to the hotel at the top of the escarpment. There he borrowed a Land Rover from a friend, and returned to pull me up the steep escarpment road. The Land Rover had no problem in towing me up those steep grades and we were at the Makuti Hotel at the top, in time for a quick lunch, and then on to my parent's home, behind the Volvo. A few well earned beers in the evening and I felt much better.

The VW was taken to the dealer in Salisbury, some 180 miles distant, who found the damage much more extensive than I had imagined. A dropped valve had damaged the piston, bent the con rod and distorted the crank. Repairs involved virtually a new engine and cost as much as I had paid for the car! Early in the new-year we headed back northwards and, as expected, we had absolutely no problems. The car was fine now but we wanted a change and we sold it to a German businessman for as much as it had cost us, including the cost of the repairs.

A quick replacement was needed for Shirley and our company equipment manager came up trumps. He told me that, following the company change to Fiats, all the BMWs were to be offered to staff before being sold on the open market. There was a beautiful 2000 TiLux, but the equipment manager took that for himself. I bought the 1800 saloon that I had had briefly and that served Shirley very well for several years. It was very quick and on the School Run, Shirley became known to the children as "Grand Prix Auntie" when she out dragged various Fiats etc at traffic lights. Also, we used that car to go to Rhodesia on holiday in it, and we had no problems whatsoever.

Cont. page 8

A further change of job brought further cars with it. Firstly I had a Fiat 125, the 1600 20hc saloon. Very fast but a bit cramped for growing children. A change of position in the company and the 125 became Shirley's car (she managed to sell the BMW at a good profit) while I was given a Ford Falcon 4.7 litre pick up. That was a car that could really motor and on gravel roads it was the original point and squirt vehicle. To keep the back wheels on the ground I always carried a minimum of two bags of cement.

When I was finishing with that company we decided to take our end of contract leave in Malawi. That was a lovely country with one of the longest lakes in Africa. However, we no longer had a company car and to get there we had only Shirley's Fiat 128, a very good little car but only about the size of a Mini. Unperturbed, we set out, Shirley and I with our three children, on our 600 mile journey and we spent a night stop in Lusaka. We continued for the remaining 400 miles early next morning. The outward journey proved no problem other than the children complaining about the very cramped back seat of the car.

The return journey was somewhat different because we were smuggling 12 bottles of South African wine back to Zambia. The only place to stow them in the car was under the very thin back seat cushion. Getting through customs took a bit of thinking about and when we arrived at the border post I asked if I might have a word with the senior customs officer. He invited me into his office and there we had a pleasant chat I told him that I would like to make a donation to the customs benevolent fund (I had no idea whether there was such a thing!) He, on behalf of the fund, said that that would be very welcome and accepted the donation there and then and we were able to continue the journey without any problem, other than the complaints from our poor children who were having a most uncomfortable ride sitting virtually directly on the wine bottles for the full 600 miles.

Another job with a subsidiary of a large group provided me with a very good, albeit high mileage Mercedes 220 petrol saloon. A lovely car and the only troubles that I can remember with it were firstly when my wife was driving and the gear lever broke. She is still a bit reluctant to say how that happened. Then one Sunday, during the middle of the heavy rains, we were driving to another town to a lunch party, Shirley wearing a lovely colourful dress. On the way I hit some deep water on the road at about 60 mph and the passenger floor pan, weakened by years of rust, gave way and a large gout of dirty, brown water came up over Shirley's feet and dress, and made an awful mess of her lovely colourful dress. To this day, she swears that I did that intentionally!

The Mercedes did get us out of trouble one evening. We had been to another town to watch a gymkhana (horse not car) and to come home I decided to use a short cut on a well used gravel track through the bush. About 10 miles along it we found that a tree had been felled and laid across the road, blocking the road almost completely. Suspecting that there might be armed bandits waiting nearby, I did not hesitate but drove right into the bush and around the felled tree, and then back on to the track. In the bumping over the bush our rear seat passenger dropped his cigarette and it landed between his backside and the car seat. He suffered quite a burn from it before he was able to pick it up and throw it away.

Although reliable, the Mercedes was becoming quite old by now and when it was approaching ¼ million miles, the company decided to replace it with a Range Rover. The early 3 door models of the Range Rovers were fast but were not particularly stable on gravel roads and I was never really happy with that car. I rarely drove it fast, particularly after an acquaintance rolled one with disastrous consequences, but it did take me to places that the Mercedes had been unable to reach. That was my last car in that part of the world. Many political and security changes had taken place while we were there and the time had come to move elsewhere in the world.

Continued in the next issue

With apologies to all the other engineers reading this.

Understanding Engineers 1

Two engineering students were riding bicycles across a university campus when one said, "Where did you get the great bike?"

The second engineer replied, "Well, I was walking yesterday, minding my own business, when a beautiful woman rode up on this bike, threw it to the ground, took off all her clothes and said, "Take what you want." The first engineer nodded approvingly and said, "Good choice: The clothes probably wouldn't have fitted you anyway."

Understanding Engineers 2

To the optimist, the glass is half-full. To the pessimist, the glass is half-empty. To the engineer, the glass is twice as big as it needs to be.

Understanding Engineers 3

The graduate with a Science degree asks, "Why does it work?"

The graduate with an Engineering degree asks, "How does it work?" The graduate with a Commerce degree asks, "How much will it cost?"

The graduate with an Arts degree asks, "Do you want fries with that?"

Understanding Engineers 4

Normal people believe that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Engineers believe that if it ain't broke, it isn't sufficiently complex yet.

Understanding Engineers 5

An engineer was crossing a road one day, when a frog called out to him and said, "If you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess." He bent over, picked up the frog, and put it in his pocket. The frog spoke up again and said, "If you kiss me, I'll turn back into a beautiful princess and stay with you for one week."

The engineer took the frog out of his pocket, smiled at it and returned it to the pocket. The frog then cried out, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a princess I'll stay with you for one week and do anything you want." Again, the engineer took the frog out, smiled at it and put it back into his pocket.

Finally, the frog asked, "What's the matter? I've told you I'm a beautiful princess and that I'll stay with you for one week and do anything you want. Why won't you kiss me?" The engineer said, "Look, I'm an engineer. I don't have time for a girlfriend. But a talking frog - now that's cool."

And Finally

Two engineers were standing at the base of a flagpole, looking at its top. A woman walked by and asked what they were doing "We're supposed to find the height of this flagpole," said Steven, "but we don't have a ladder."

The woman took a spanner from her purse, loosened a couple of bolts, and laid the pole down on the ground. Then she took a tape measure from her purse, took a measurement, announced, "6.5 metres," and walked away. One engineer shook his head and laughed, "A lot of good that does us. We ask for the height and she gives us the length!" Both engineers have since quit their engineering jobs and have been elected to Parliament.

The Series of Memories of Ellesmere Residents Extracts from book 6 of the “Memories” Booklets Published in early 2000 by the Ellesmere Society

Memory 31

Ellesmere Women's Institute

Remembered by Heather Clay

The first meeting of Ellesmere Women's Institute was held on November 18th 1924 in Miss Jones' Garden Hut, in Scotland Street at "The Ladies School" as it was then known.

Fifty six members were admitted and the first demonstration, on Basketry, was given by Mrs. Daymond of Pant Glas W.I. The first officers of the committee were Mrs. Jebb - President, Mrs. C. Rogers - Vice President, Mrs. Stealey - Secretary, Miss Bury - Treasurer.

Later on, monthly meetings were held in the Red Lion until in January 1929, the W.I. moved to the old Town Hall where they remained until the late 1950's. They then moved to the Primary School for a time, followed by the Methodist School Room.

It was in 1968 when the new Town Hall opened that meetings moved there and have remained ever since.

Attendance rose from 127 in 1951 to 140 in 1952 with an average attendance of 84 per meeting.

The W.I. again had a high membership in the 1970's but since then with membership fees increasing and other organizations coming on to the scene membership has fallen.

The Drama section of the W.I. in 1957 achieved fame, the following is an extract from the Annual Report. The Women's Institute of 1957 has had its greatest honour in the Drama Group as winning team in the Drama Festival. It was of great concern to all members and the thrill of winning was experienced by all. The chief thrill was appearing in the Scala Theatre, London, and performing before the Queen Mother and a large audience.

The Queen Mother presented the Certificate of Honour to the Producer Mrs. Nankivell.

Great due must be given to the Producer and all the cast for their cooperation and enthusiasm.

"Altogether a very notable event."

The W.I. also entered tableaux in various Ellesmere Carnivals. In 1965 they won first prize with their tableau "The First W.I. Meeting in Wales". The 1997 president Mrs. Heather Clay, remembers being dressed as a bridesmaid for a Victorian Wedding Scene. The carriage loaned by Brown's of Whixall was decorated in pink and white and pulled by 'Jenny' the horse. The carriage had to remain in her father's garage for nine months because of the 'Foot and Mouth Epidemic' in 1967. In 1970 she was also Alice in the Garden Scene from 'Alice in Wonderland' for which they won 2nd prize.]

The tableau, in the 1970's, she remembers most vividly went under the title of 'Buy British'. Sir Michael Edwards arranged for the W.I. to borrow a 'Mini'. Although the car's brake was on, it kept slipping on the wagon resulting in the members of the tableau having to hold on to the car. All the while trying to keep their red skirts, white blouses and boaters looking smart.

Mrs. T.C.Price, during the Second World War, started the Produce Guild which canned fruit etc. The produce Guild which became national later on eventually came to an end about 20 years ago. A cup, in her name, is still used by Ellesmere W.I. today.

The W.I. have always played a part in the community helping to raise money for the Scout hut, providing seats around the town, helping to set up the putting green, and numerous other activities.

They have made and exhibited items in various shows such as the West Mids and the Ellesmere Flower Show.

Whilst not allowed to give money to charity, every year they provide support to a worthy cause. 1974 saw their Golden Jubilee, and in 1984 their Diamond Jubilee, both being celebrated by special dinners. In 1999, Ellesmere W.I. was 75 years old. Gone are the days of 'Jam and Jerusalem', today there is a modern outlook which hopefully, will attract younger ladies to the organization.

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Ellesmere Twinning Association

Remembered by Ron Roberts

Diksmuide is a delightful town with friendly residents, most of whom speak excellent English. The town was totally destroyed during the 1914-1918 war. During the 1920's it was rebuilt in the same Flemish style that existed prior to the war, so there are many replica 17th and 18th century buildings.

The initial suggestion that Ellesmere should become twinned with Diksmuide, Belgium, came via Fullwood Ltd. The manager of their associated company in Diksmuide, Fullwood Packo, was aware that in 1978 the Diksmuide Town Council was seeking an English twinning. As the manager frequently visited Ellesmere he approached Mr. Ron Roberts, then Mayor of Ellesmere.

A meeting was arranged in the Town Hall to discuss twinning and a large attendance proved there was a genuine interest. Mr. and Mrs. R. Roberts and a small party travelled to Diksmuide in October 1978, and a return visit by the Diksmuide contingent was made in the November. Agreement was reached and the inaugural visit to Diksmuide took place in April 1979. Some 45 residents of Ellesmere travelled to witness the signing of the Twinning Charter in Diksmuide Town Hall on the 6th April 1979.

Thus the Ellesmere Twinning Association was formed as a non-political, independent, self-funding organisation with the aims of:

- A) promoting and fostering friendship and understanding between the people of Ellesmere and Diksmuide.
- b) encouraging visits by individuals and groups to and from the linked towns, particularly young people, and the development of personal contacts, in order to broaden the mutual understanding of the cultural, recreational, educational and commercial activities of the linked towns.

Following the inaugural meeting, a party from Diksmuide visited Ellesmere and on the 16th August 1979, a tree was planted in the Cremome Gardens, to commemorate the twinning. Since then, all twinning visits have been on an alternate year basis. In the early years the Association tried taking school children to Diksmuide, but it was not a success, because our twinnings do not speak French. but Flemish (and English).

The twinning has been on a family to family basis. Wherever possible families are matched according to age, occupation or special interest. Twinners can be single persons, married couples or larger families. The annual gathering lasts five days with the host twinner(s) entertaining their visitors. There is one organised day-trip for the visitors, otherwise the time is spent privately between host and guest families.

To end the visit everyone involved gathers for an informal dinner-dance. In 1986 Diksmuide was awarded a Flag of Honour from the Council of Europe for its services to twinning over the previous twenty years. (They are also twinned with French and German towns).

The Ellesmere Twinning Association took part in the festivities which included the official opening of the Ellesmere Path, and the planting of an English oak, taken by the Association.

Five years later the opportunity arose for a reciprocal street naming in Ellesmere, and Diksmuide Drive was dedicated to the twinning on 15th August 1991.

Being self-funded, the Association is always seeking ways to raise money to meet its costs.

To cover the Diksmuide festivities, the Association organised the first Ellesmere Christmas Street Fair in December 1986. It was successful and continued each year until December 1993.

More Memories in the next issue

Here are 20 facts about March that you won't believe!

- 1) In old Roman calendars, one year used to be ten months long, starting in March and ending in December.
- 2) The "Ides of March" was a day in the Roman calendar equivalent to March 15th. It was considered a deadline for settling debts. It was also the day Julius Caesar was assassinated.
- 3) If you were born in March, your birth flower is a daffodil!
- 4) March babies are spoiled with two birthstones: aquamarine, and bloodstone which symbolize courage.
- 5) There are two zodiac signs in March. Pisces, which is until March 20, and Aries which is from the 21st.
- 6) The first month of spring is March, which starts between the 19th and the 21st
- 7) March is the equivalent of September in the Southern Hemisphere.
- 8) Every year, March and June finish on the same day of the week.
- 9) March is the time of year when animals start waking up from hibernation.
- 10) The name for March comes from Mars, the Roman god of war. It was named as such in both the Julian and Gregorian calendars.
- 11) The Vernal Equinox occurs around March 20 or 21. This is when the sun is directly above the equator, making the day and night equal length.
- 12) The Anglo-Saxons called March "Hlyd monath" meaning "Stormy month" or "Hraed monath" meaning "Rugged month."
- 13) The popular social media outlet Twitter was launched on March 21, 2006, with the first tweet going out the same day. It was posted by the founder, Jack Dorsey, which read "just setting up my twtr."
- 14) Saint Patrick's Day occurs every March 17th, celebrated in many western countries to commemorate the day Saint Patrick died.
- 15) Easter Sunday is another popular holiday of this month. Originally observed by Christians to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it has now become a holiday involving egg hunting, candy, and the Easter bunny.
- 16) Statistically, March is the most unproductive month of the year in the U.S. This is the result of "March Madness" which is the season of NBA. Some companies lose up to \$1.9 billion in wages paid to workers who were not productive, and instead spent company time on betting on NBA games.
- 17) Back in the older days, March was when military campaigns would resume that had previously been put on hold for winter.
- 18) On March 10, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell made the first ever phone call. It was to his assistant and he said "Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you."
- 19) The Eiffel Tower was ascended for the first time. Eiffel himself led a group of government officials and members of the press to the top. The elevators were not in operation yet, so the journey was made on foot and took over an hour.
- 20) President John F. Kennedy founded the Peace Corps on March 1, 1961. It is a successful volunteer organization which has since sent at least 235,000 Americans abroad to developing countries to help with health care, education, and other human needs.

MOTORING MEMOIRS OF CHRIS STRETTON, b1950

Part 4

First the throttle cable broke, necessitating getting back to the campsite using the choke lever but managing a fairly easy repair that evening.

Then, whilst on a campsite on the Adriatic we had noticed that the clutch master cylinder was a bit low on fluid so, next day, managed to find some brake fluid in a local garage to top it up. Unfortunately this later reacted with that already in there, resulting in the rubbers of the master cylinder swelling and the clutch ceasing to work altogether. This was just before Trieste on the way home and, thankfully, it looked as though there was an agent in the city where we could get a repair kit. Getting there was a challenge but John did an excellent job of driving through the afternoon rush hour with no clutch. The traffic lights technique consisted of switching off the ignition to stop in gear, then starting in gear when the lights turned green. Getting close to the Rootes agent the throttle cable went again so we walked the rest of the way only to find that they had neither cable nor clutch repair kit. They suggested we would have more luck in Udine, some 75 kms north. At least this was in the right direction for our route home-wards. The throttle cable was fixed again and we headed off up the autostrada, an easier drive than the city rush hour, having more success when we found the second agent.

The clutch was duly fixed in the morning and we continued with the holiday, spending a day in Venice but now worried about a nasty noise coming from the water-pump!

Next day we camped near Innsbruck, where we spent some time looking around and then headed off towards the Fern Pass only for the water temperature gauge to soar. Imps have no natural cooling so we had no choice but to stop for our third problem. The AA 5 Star documentation showed a Rootes agent in Innsbruck and we thought we were only a couple of miles away so started hitching back. No-one stopped for us (we later discovered that the UK hitching sign is a rude gesture in Austria!). After walking 4 hours and 15 miles we arrived just as the garage was closing at 6 pm. Thankfully they had the repair kit and, whilst at the counter, we met a local ex-pat Brit with an MGB. On explaining our predicament he would have offered to take us back to the car but four people cannot fit easily in an MGB for 15 miles. He therefore suggested that we catch the train back from the station nearby which then delivered us to a station just 10 minutes walk from the car!! If only we had known...

We camped where we were that night and, next morning, fixed the pump. This was made much easier with the help of a local agricultural garage owner, who lent us his workshop and tools. Pete's parents were Austrian and his German language skills were also a great help.

The fourth problem hit as we were near Cologne when the dynamo gave up charging. This seemed to be due to a faulty regulator and there was not a lot we could do other than be frugal with the volts and hope for the best. No travelling in the dark and only push starting!

We made it to Ostend and crossed back to Dover where we camped very soon as the dark was coming and the battery had little left to offer. Next morning we just made it to Maidstone, push starting the car in traffic each time it stalled, where we had a new regulator fitted. Then the throttle cable broke again but was easier to replace now back in the UK!

This had been a great experience, made even more memorable having overcome all the engineering challenges we suffered, and for which I was most grateful to Dad for all the knowledge he had imparted in me.

Whilst still at Coventry, in 1971 Dad and his friend William collected me in Dad's Lotus Elan and the three of us (quite a squeeze!) went to the Daily Express International meeting at Silverstone. This was a Grand Prix type event without the points. Drivers there included Graham Hill, Bruce McLaren and Jackie Stewart.. Best of all William had come with three Press Passes, giving me access all areas to take photos.

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We camped in a tent over night for the race the following day and our neighbours were most impressed when, on arrival, we had opened the Elan's bonnet and removed a bottle of Bull's Blood red wine from between the cam covers... just the right temperature!

In 1971 four wheels were looking more attractive than two and, having learnt the basics on David's farm in the Ford Popular, I was soon up to speed on the road, learning in Dad's Saab 96. I passed my test on the first attempt and was let out in the Saab alone, once putting it in the hedge between Broseley and Much Wenlock. Luckily it came out with no more damage than some green marks on the passenger's door. Quite how I had managed to get the car in a position which made these lines run at 45 degrees to the horizontal I never worked out. Dad was very understanding: *'you bend it, you fix it'*! One result of this was that it seemed best to have my own wheels so it was timely that I was offered a Ford Anglia 105E by my stepfather, Bill. The car had belonged to his recently departed uncle and Bill was looking to get rid of it, letting me have it for the price on the remaining road tax. The uncle has only used the car for short weekly shopping trips for some years and it needed some cosmetic and mechanical work doing. Most serious was a lack of attachment of the rear springs underneath the boot. The original pressings had rusted away. I bought new parts and pop-riveted them in place, covering them liberally with bitumastic paint. Clearly the MoT was not so vigorous then but the fix was good and gave no problems for the rest of my ownership!

To finish the job I resprayed the car completely. Not having a garage this was done on the driveway at my mother's house using a Burgess airless spray gun on sunny days and turning it an unusual shade of purple.

The Anglia now had to put up with a new life and different driving challenges. My mother owned a cottage on the Llyn Peninsula which provided great escapes. Having been there one weekend for a short holiday, I was travelling back to my flat in Edgbaston when, in the middle of nowhere near Ysptyty Ifan, the engine gave a large bang that sounded as though it had dropped a valve, requiring immediate investigation. I always travelled with a toolbox on board (didn't everyone then?) so removed all the spark-plugs and had a feel around to see if all the valves were still in the right place, which they were. Cranking over the engine with the plugs out didn't produce any nasty noises or any clues as to the problem so, as we were miles from any help, I set off again very cautiously. We were heading down off the mountains so the engine wasn't having to work very hard and all seemed OK.

Once on the A5 and heading south, the engine was struggling on hills, producing clouds of smoke that poured from under the bonnet as well as from the exhaust, definitely down on power. Remarkably the engine got me back to Birmingham but now needed some attention, like replacement! A copy of Exchange & Mart pointed me to a local garage that did replacement engines so I booked it in, asking that they take the top off the old engine and show me the problem therein. It was clear that the engine had become seriously worn such that there was so much of a gap between the pistons and the bores that some of the piston rings had broken up, the bits finding their way on top of the piston and the bang I'd heard was the bits being spat out through the valves!

After completing my MSc, in January 1973, I started work in Bridgend as a Pollution Inspector at the Glamorgan River Authority for which job I needed a reliable car so ordered a brand new Ford Escort Sport. A Mexico would have been better but the funds didn't run to that! Until this was delivered I had to keep the Anglia going and it gave me one more fright. We were living in a rental house in Pencoed at the time whilst looking for a house to buy. Dad and my stepmother, came to stay for a weekend when, returning on the main road from Bridgend, the steering felt a bit vague so I stopped to see if there was a puncture. None to be seen. A little further on... the same again. The third time I stopped was on a bend: still no evidence of a puncture but the car definitely had a slight mind of its own. When I turned the wheel to go back onto the road it spun freely around...no connection to the front wheels! This car's engineering predated steering racks, having a steering box instead. The forged drop-arm, connecting the box to the steering link had snapped...good job it didn't happen at speed somewhere! Getting the car back to the house, about a mile away, was a challenge but needs must... Dad took over the driving whilst I walked alongside the car, kicking the front wheel to direct it on the required heading. A scrapyard soon delivered the necessary replacement which was easily fixed.

To be continued

Local information

Age UK Befriending Service

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/befriending-services/sign-up-for-telephone-befriending/>

Good news the Vaccine is here. **Please don't phone the surgery to book a vaccine.** You will be phone from the surgery and be offered an appointment at the RJAH hospital, or Prees surgery. The invitation could be from either Ellesmere or Whitchurch surgeries. If you receive a letter from the NHS offering you an appointment at one of the large vaccination hubs in Birmingham or Manchester etc there is no need to accept it, if you don't take up the invitation you will still be on the local practice's list.



Take 1 minute each day and help fight the outbreak.

Get the Covid 19 Symptom Tracker App from the App store or Google

Urgent Care Centres

Urgent Care Centres (UCCs) at Princess Royal Hospital (PRH) in Telford and the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (RSH) will temporarily relocate to the Minor Injury Units (MIUs) in Whitchurch and Bridgnorth to form two Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs).

PLEASE CONTINUE TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Key contact details: Ellesmere Covid-19 Community Support Group:
01691 596290 / 622689

www.ellesmerecovidsupportgroups.org.uk

Shropshire Council Helpline: 0345 678 9028

For people living in the Welshampton or Lyneal area - please contact the Parish Council on 01948 710672 or go on their website <https://www.welshamptonandlyneal-pc.gov.uk/> where you will find information about their local Community Support group



Pastoral Support from the Churches in Ellesmere

Rev'd Pat Hawkins St Mary's Church

Tel [01691622571](tel:01691622571) email revpat.hawkins@gmail.com.

St Mary's Ellesmere:

Weekly services have once again had to stop during this 3rd Lockdown.

However, some services are streamed and are on You Tube



The
**Cellar
Church**
ELLESMERE

Pastor Phil Wright 'The Cellar Church'.

[07711 986694](tel:07711986694) email: pastor.phil@me.com

The Cellar Church online every Sunday 10am and Wednesday 6pm

Follow the link Directly on our Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmxif6AT5w7IJH4Yxkbi6tQ>

On the cellar church website: <https://www.cellarchurch.co.uk/audio-video/>

Rev Julia Skitt Ellesmere Methodist Church

[01691 657349](tel:01691657349) email: rev.julia@mail.com

Ellesmere Methodist Church Services can be streamed from:

Wesley's Chapel in London - on Wednesdays 12.45, Thursdays 12.45 and Sundays 9.45 and 11.00am

<https://www.wesleyschapel.org.uk/livestreaming/>

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster - Sundays at 11.00am

[https://www.youtube.com/user/MCHWEvents?](https://www.youtube.com/user/MCHWEvents?utm_source=Methodist+Church+House&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11417259_Update)

[utm_source=Methodist+Church+House&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11417259_Update](https://www.youtube.com/user/MCHWEvents?utm_source=Methodist+Church+House&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11417259_Update)



Ellesmere Catholic Convent Chapel

The Chapel is open, the building on the left as you drive in. 8:30am - 6pm.

If you have anything that you'd like to ask the sister to pray for you: Phone [01691 622 283](tel:01691622283)

