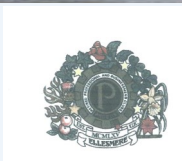




## Probus Club Ellesmere



## Covid-19 Lockdown 2021 Newsletter

Issue 37

April 22 2021

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Dear all,

Would you believe it, it is one year since the first issue of the Lockdown newsletter. I never imagined I would still be doing this a year later.

Hopefully there is some light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. It will be nice to be able to go to the Comrades Club for a meeting, and go out for a meal sitting inside and not have to sit outside and sit 2 yards apart from people you don't live with.

As Sir Captain Tom said "Tomorrow will be a better day".

Best wishes

Paul

### Speaker's Corner

**At our next Probus Zoom meeting on Thursday 15th April at 10.30am the speaker will be Susan Ord speaking to us about 'The secrets of Handwriting'**

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

Dear Probus friends,

I hope that you, yours, your friends and neighbours are keeping safe and as well as can be. The general feeling about the Covid-19 pandemic seems to be that life is easing sensibly into a more flexible state. Hopefully that



**Sometimes in the waves of change we  
find our true direction**

means that we will be able to get out and about a bit more. My motorbike has had its first outing since last autumn and the fishing rods are being dusted off this week for a trip to Llansantffraid to fish the river Vymwy for trout. All good for the spirits. Thankfully most of the local shops, hairdressers and pubs are back in action so recent ponytails have been hacked off. Everything is bulking up in the gardens and there is a proper sense of spring beckoning summer.

As for the football European Super League, the least said about that the better, it could perhaps be summed up as the greedy being taken down a peg or two by those that matter. Our Ellesmere Probus Club Committee met on 12th April and we are exploring the potential for combining Zoom and face-to-

face meeting once we can get back safely to the Comrades Club and speakers are willing to attend. We can't predict when that will happen but will keep you in touch.

The Committee asked me to stay on as your President until the November 2021 AGM which I have agreed to do. That means that our 'hand-over' will be back to its normal anniversary in line with our constitution which is good.

I attended a service of remembrance for the late Duke of Edinburgh on behalf of all our Probus members at St Mary's Parish Church on Friday 16th April along with the Mayor and Lady Mayoress and local representatives of civic and military groups. The 'reflection' was given by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire and was most moving. I am sure that HM The Queen and her family remain in our thoughts during their time of grieving alongside others that we know in a similar sad situation.

Do feel free to invite guests to our Zoom meetings and encourage them to join our happily ever-expanding Club if they would like to. Stay safe.

With very best wishes and thanks as ever to Paul for putting our excellent newsletters together, your contributions of articles/snippets are always welcome.

Jeremy

21st April 2021

## **Probus Zoom speaker 15 April 2021 - Revd Pat Hawkins**

Jeremy welcomed the members and guests and introduced Revd Pat Hawkins, vicar of St Mary's Parish Church, Ellesmere.

Pat took up her post on February 20th 2020, five weeks before the Covid-19 lockdown. When she was at school studying History for O-level Pat became interested in the 19th century social legislation especially emancipation. It never occurred to her that she couldn't be a vicar in due course, despite coming from a non-churchgoing family she was always aware of 'someone', ie God being present in her life. Her mother was Leicester born and bred and never moved from there. Pat found her way to the Methodist Sunday school, enjoying the teas and outings as well as the capacity to sing good hymns and that church's passion for social justice.

Pat then read Modern History at Oxford University where she became intrigued by the Venerable Bede and the 'love of God' ministry of St Chad from Lindisfarne to this part of the country. As a student Pat attended Taize, the ecumenical Christian community in Southern France, originally a safe-house where Jews were helped to escape from France. Here Pat shared the community with about 8,000 others learning about silence and colour for instance.

Pat's first job was at Barnardos in South London helping young people move from care to independent living, teaching the skills to cope with adult life, saying that they taught her more than she taught them. She then trained as a social worker at Exeter University though spent a lot of time watching the tranquility of the boats in the Exe estuary! In her 20's Pat called to full-time Christian ministry as an Anglican Franciscan Sister which is similar to a nun. This taught Pat about herself, what she was good at and what not so. There were nine women living together with a strict rule 'stay out of the kitchen if you're not cooking' and never saying 'that's how my mother used to do it'. 11th November 1992 Church of England made the momentous decision to ordain priests and deacons (probationers). Female Bishops were permitted from 2014.

In 1999 Pat went to train as a priest at Oxford and in 2001 took a curacy in Stafford which felt like coming home. She then became vicar at a parish in Wolverhampton before moving to Lichfield Cathedral for 5 years but there missed parish life and engagement with local community.

Pat noted that people who know God need to convey something of the joy of being alive and love for fellow people, meeting their needs where possible. Her Franciscan background developed her passion for being really involved in the life of the community, making God seem attractive and helping people understand the excitement of a life of faith. That background led Pat to apply for the post of vicar of Ellesmere which is reputed to have the best view from the vicarage in the Diocese of Lichfield. She is happiest in her walking boots and finds prayer very valuable when walking. She is currently locally notching up 100 miles representing the final 'leg' of the pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Donations of money from anyone towards that are welcome. Pat expressed her thanks to the Council for their fine maintenance of the churchyard.

Pat has an identical twin sister, Ann, who has two girls and a boy. Ann is a recently retired priest in Northampton and has moved to the Forest of Dean to care for her husband who is living with dementia. Pat shares the vicarage with her sightless cat Theo.

Pat values the catholic tradition of the Church of England which fits with her passion for history and connectedness with place particularly where people have prayed for so long. Nevertheless she believes that there is room for the many different types of Christian worship with each accepting the agreement to differ.

Following a number of questions from the Probus audience Pat felt that the recent fall in church congregations has perhaps not 'bottomed out' but ways of worshipping have changed, markedly through internet services. Some people have stopped attending churches because previously they had done so 'because they felt that they ought to'. Young people can tend to have difficulty with church approaches to issues such as sexuality. Pat is unsure what long-term impact on churchgoers the Covid-19 pandemic will have, adding that Sunday shopping and sport have influenced the reduction in congregations generally.

Last year Pat was appointed Honorary Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth 2nd which involves her preaching once a year at St James' Palace and attending a garden party. It is one of the highest honours possible for clergy. Despite her original attendance at Methodist Church Pat moved to the Church of England because of the stronger sacramental approach, formal liturgy and 'colour'.

Pat hopes that her post as vicar of Ellesmere (church and town) will be her last. She was welcomed to becoming a governor of Lakeland Academy and clarified that the life of the cathedral meant that she couldn't engage with parish life, it being focussed on visitors and pilgrims. Here in the parish there is much more freedom of action and community involvement.

Jeremy thanked Pat for her fascinating story and the members shared a round of applause for Pat.

## **We saw the Sea Part 2 *By Peter Sanderson***

### **Safety**

Living on a potential 'floating bomb', we were acutely aware of safety precautions. Smoking was allowed in the engineroom and domestic accommodation, while at sea and in the smokers room and engineroom in port, though this could be stopped if necessary.

Weekly lifeboat and fire drills were carried out to ensure everything worked properly and attendance was mandatory, including wives, unless you were on watch. Everyone had designated lifeboats and tasks which were posted on special noticeboards in the accommodation spaces. The drills involved lowering lifeboats, operating diesel fire pumps, using firehoses, extinguishers and breathing apparatus and rescuing 'Dead Fred'-a boiler suit stuffed with about 15 stone of chains to simulate a casualty!

Engine and pumprooms, in addition to hand extinguishers and fire hoses, had fixed, one-shot smothering systems; their operating gear was regularly checked for integrity as they could only be operated when an emergency occurred.

At the end of each night time deck watch, the outgoing Deck Officer of the watch completed an external tour of the ship and accommodation to check all was safe and secure.

### **Accommodation**

Apprentices and junior crew ratings had double berth cabins; everyone else had single berth cabins. On older ships, only senior officers had en-suite cabins, the rest used various communal washrooms in their respective accommodation. Later ones had en-suite cabins for all officers and petty officers. There were also laundry rooms, equipped with Hoover "Tanglematic" washing machines for personal gear; boiler suits were cleaned in the engineroom in a "Tanglematic" which was leaking too much to be left in the laundry- they were amazingly robust machines! Bed linen, towels, tablecloths and other such domestic items, with an on-board store sufficient for 3 to 4 weeks, were supplied by the Company, changed weekly and sent ashore for laundering on arrival in port and returned before sailing.

The cabin design reflected shoreside tastes of the time the ship was built, somewhat spartan in the 50s, becoming sumptuous in the 60s with sweeping staircases to the Old Man and Chief's suites with stylish veneered wood/fireproof backed panelling throughout. In the 70s, "Holiday Inn" was the style but was still very comfortable. Only the ships built from the 60s onwards were air conditioned, the others were retrofitted with varying degrees of success.

Each ship had an Owner's Suite, comparable in style to the Old Man and Chief's and was used by pilots if they had to stay on board and occasional passengers. There was also a 2 berth hospital with gimballed cots and proper bath (with a salt water supply for immersing anyone who had sustained burns) and a standard medical outfit. We were all trained in first aid, but the ship's doctor was either the Mate or the Chief Steward, ably assisted by a copy of the "Ship Captain's Medical Guide", complete with lurid photographs! Their services were very seldom required! In emergencies, the ship would divert to the nearest port or, if far from land used an international radio liaison system where contact was made with the nearest passenger ship or a warship for advice and possibly rendezvous to transfer the patient.

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## **Domestic routines**

Stewards looked after the daily accommodation 'housework' and, in uniform, served our meals in the Officers' Saloon; a full silver service three times a day at allocated tables and places, according to rank, and we wore the uniform of the day- 'blues' in temperate climes and 'whites' in the tropics. If a wife was present, all the men stood at the table till she was seated!

Food was plentiful and, initially of rib-clagging "British Standard Fare" such as Irish Stew & Dumplings with boiled (to death) Veg. followed by Spotted Dick & Custard, all served in a stifling 120° F, non-air conditioned saloon! Butter dishes were ice cooled but the contents rapidly turned liquid. Mercifully, or sadly, as passenger ships disappeared, cooks used to preparing gourmet meals signed on and we really were well fed and air conditioning became standard. On Chinese crewed ships, food was excellent and we were in seventh heaven with proper Chinese food a regular item long before such meals became routinely available in the UK.

A print of Annigoni's portrait of the Queen hung in the Saloon which also contained a small cabinet containing the shell after which the ship was named (these two items along with the ship's bell were always returned to Head Office when the ship was scrapped). Saloon tables were fitted with "fiddles"- a retractable 'kerb' around the table rim which was raised by about 3" in rough weather to stop plates sliding off the table; the heavy damask tablecloths had water poured over them for the same reason. The dining chairs were shackled to the deck with lanyards to provide a degree of restraint for the occupant. Adjacent to the saloon was usually a smokeroom/bar where the twice weekly movies were shown, using a 16 mm film projector, This was later added to by a large colour television set and video player; direct broadcast shoreside programmes could also be received when in range.

Reading was the main recreation and the library provided by the Seafarers' Education Service was changed at regular intervals, in addition, there was a technical library to facilitate studying for further qualifications. We also used to swap paperbacks with other ships when possible in port. The larger ships had games rooms with table tennis tables and dart boards, games which were quite interesting to play in rough weather. At one time there was a craze for slot car racing and a spare cabin would be fitted out with a Scalextric circuit. Most ships had small, outdoor swimming pools, which were popular in the tropics!

There was small "slop chest" or shop on board, opened once a week, where you could buy restricted amounts of beer, cigarettes, cases of soft drinks, sweets, writing paper, underwear, etc. on your bar account. Alcoholic duty-free drinks were sold in the bar and a discrete eye was kept by the Old Man (Captain) & Chief on consumption. You could also buy duty-free "docking bottles" of spirits when you paid off at the end of a trip.

All the accommodation spaces were thoroughly inspected weekly by the Old Man, Mate, Chief Engineer and the Chief Steward.

## **Mail**

Very important and well organised by the Company! Outgoing personal mail was put in letterbox in the ship's office, the box being closed as late as possible before arriving in port; postage was paid by the Company. Incoming mail was brought aboard by the Company port agent and rapidly distributed!

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Depending on time constraints, it was sometimes possible to reply to your mail for posting before leaving port. In all my time, the mail never went astray, even when we had changes of destination, sometimes at the last minute- on one memorable occasion, we were embarking the Liverpool Pilot and orders were changed to Rotterdam-the mail still got through, along with the relief personnel! The Pilot didn't even come aboard as we turned to our new course.

One remarkable, unofficial, mailing point was when on transit through the Straits of Messina, between Sicily and Italy. Several empty (!) gin bottles would be lashed together; half were filled with loose cigarettes and the remainder with personal letters rolled up to get them into the bottles. After firmly screwing down the caps, the bundle would be thrown overboard to be collected by boatmen waiting in our wake. They would then take them ashore, stamp and post them. The mail got home a day or two later, without fail.

### **Working conditions**

On the bridge, tranquil, warm, sunny most of the time! Not so when in the Baltic or North Atlantic in winter, but the bridge was steam heated and they were rufty, tufty sailors after all! In the machinery spaces, generally hot, like working in a greenhouse on a hot summer's day, sweaty and noisy, but pleasantly warm in the high altitudes! We were all volunteers and got on with it or packed up and left if it didn't suit. Everyone was always tired because sleep was only possible in about 4 – 5 hr. snatches; unlike passenger ships, the ever-present vibration prevented deep sleep. Everything rattled and shook in varying degrees and beer mats, wooden wedges and whatever else would provide relief were jammed in everywhere. In some cases, vibration was so severe that machinery, wiring and controls were badly damaged. Nothing really could be done about it as it was a function of hull and propeller resonance- some ships were better than others and the degree varied according to the speed, draft, trim, fuel oil disposition and, in shallow waters, resonance with the sea bed! Apart from that, it was great. Once the pilot had left and Full Away On Passage rung on the telegraph, we were our own little community and settled into the routine until disturbed either by a change in destination radioed from London or by bad weather or by End Of Passage being rung. Essentially, we only needed food, domestic supplies and fuel, as water was distilled on board for both us and the boilers. When anything went wrong, it was up to us to sort it out- There was no AA/RAC! A considerable number of spares were carried and in addition to the usual hand and machine tools and lifting gear, there was a welding set and hydraulic pipe bending equipment so we could get most things sorted, the exception being burned out electric motors which were replaced with spares and the damaged ones were landed in port and, amazingly, re-wound overnight.

### **Career Progression**

Career progression depended on obtaining your Board of Trade Certificates of Competency ("Tickets") and our apprenticeship was specifically tailored for these qualifications. Before you could sit the exams, you had to have served the stipulated minimum of 18 months watchkeeping sea time for each Certificate. Cargo ships at that time spent weeks at a time in port, and broke watches for those periods, so, gaining sea time was a lengthy process on them. Passenger ships had many engineers, only a few having the chance of being watchkeepers, so, again, sea time accrual was problematic.

However, on tankers, in port, watches were never broken as engines were kept on 20 minutes' notice of readiness for safety reasons and all the engineers were watchkeepers and so you rapidly gained sea time. The Company encouraged you to get your ticket as quickly as possible since the more certificated officers were on board not only enhanced the skill levels, but lowered the insurance premiums. Once you got your 2<sup>nd</sup> Class ticket, promotion to the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer was rapid. On getting your 1<sup>st</sup> Class ticket, three or four further trips may see promotion to Chief Engineer. The majority of engineers held steam certificates and as motorships were in the ascendant, young Chief Engineers would find themselves back on motorships for a six month stint as watchkeepers to get sea time for their motor endorsements.

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At one time, I had 2 Extra Chief Engineers and a Superintendent Engineer in my charge as well as the normal engineroom staff. The ship's actual Chief Engineer issued the Board of Trade watchkeeping certificates.

Tanker turnaround times were in the order of about 20 hrs for all sizes, so on a VLCC on the Persian Gulf/Europe via the Cape, a run of about 30 days each way, you would spend about 10 days in total in port per year. Cargo pumping horsepower was about two thirds of voyage full speed requirements, thus a pumping capacity of about 4,000 hp was available on an 18,000 tonner ship, rising to 20,000hp on a 225,000 tonner.

#### **Shore leave**

While shore leave was granted where possible, some countries didn't allow it anyway and most of us didn't bother unless a reasonable town or village was nearby. Shore leave expired about an hour before sailing and the time was posted on a board at the gangway. Woe betide anyone who didn't get back in time- the ship sailed and they were left behind to the tender mercies of the local authorities as well as losing their job! Loading and discharging was often at offshore buoys, sometimes out of sight of land so you couldn't get ashore anyway.

#### **Furlough**

This was on the basis of 104 days per year plus statutory holidays (Christmas, Easter & Bank holidays) and was granted pro rata to length of time aboard, usually 4½-5 months. Unless the ship was in the UK/Europe at the time, you would be flown home from anywhere in the world when your furlough was due, your relief would also be flown in. It was found, as part of a research programme, that joining personnel recovered from their jetlag if they rested for a day or two before joining ship, usually in excellent hotels, which was very pleasant especially if you joined in Singapore or Sydney! It didn't apply when you were homeward bound!

Checking my records, over the 17 years, I spent 10 years actually on board, the rest of the time ashore was made up of 3 years apprenticeship, 2½yrs in head office and the balance on leave, study leave and training courses, so- we saw the sea !

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### **Women Ministers - how the vote was almost lost**

Our Probus talk by the Rev Pat Hawkins reminded me of how the Synod of the Church of England almost voted in 1992 , yet again, against the Ordination of women.

A friend of mine, John, was a lay member of the Synod and strongly favoured the admission of women, as did his wife Jean. Everyone knew that the vote would be extremely close and the debate began. Whilst John was in the debate Jean was out shopping. Unfortunately she fell and injured her ankle.

When her ambulance arrived at the hospital there were the usual questions about how they could contact her next of kin as she was unable to walk. To her credit Jean refused the information. This did not make her popular.

The debate lasted five and a half hours. When the votes were counted the majority in favour was only two. It was, as Wellington once said, "A close run thing". On such small events great issues may depend.

Mike Grundy

## **My later years of motoring: Part 11 by Brian Rodgers**

By 1985 the work situation in Oman was changing. Many new roads had already been built and, apart from exploration roads for the oil companies, there was little work for which pure 4x4s were required, although they were still needed by the few companies operating deep in the desert. The MD of my new company assured me that when we had any large contracts in the Interior, then we would buy a Land Rover County V8. That never came about.

Initially, while we had no work in the Interior, for everyday work I had a Toyota Super Crown saloon. With its 2.8 litre engine, and 3-speed plus overdrive auto transmission, it was very comfortable and fast. In the mid-80s, few European cars were as well equipped as it was, with all electric windows, mirrors and automatic radio aerial, excellent air-conditioning and even a small refrigerator (suitable for 6 cans of drink). A considerable part of my work involved travel into Sharjah and Ras al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates, and then on to the Musandam Peninsula of Oman, overlooking the Straits of Hormuz. The Crown was ideal for those long journeys.

When the company was awarded a job in the Interior, we needed to mobilise very quickly and the only 4x4 available to me was a Toyota 4 Runner – an SUV based upon the Hi Lux pick up, but with a full 5 seater body. A very good car, its only problem was the GRP roof. Because there had been several fatal accidents resulting from the roof breaking open during roll-overs, the oil companies were not keen to have these vehicles on contracts. However, I persuaded the particular company that, in my hands, the car would be suitable for the job to be done. In fact, the car proved to be very satisfactory, if a little small, and it was very reasonable off highway, particularly in sand.

Over the next few years I had a number of different 4x4s, some good and one terrible. The latter was one of the 4 cylinder, 2 litre, petrol engined Isuzu Troopers. That must have been the worst performing vehicle that I ever had. I have vivid memories of being overtaken by heavily laden light trucks and mini buses in town. In the desert its performance was pathetic, and it could not have pulled the skin off a rice pudding, let alone pull itself out of heavy sand.

After that I had several Toyotas, both Land Cruiser estates and Hi Lux pick-ups. My main memory of the Hi Lux was when we organised some very unofficial competitions, in which the object was to climb as high as possible up a sand dune on the downwind side of a cliff. A Range Rover driver boasted beforehand that he would have no problem in winning. That he did not do! With the Hi Lux, with tyre pressures suitably adjusted, I used low ratio 4<sup>th</sup> to accelerate on the run up to the bottom of the dune and then changed down to 3<sup>rd</sup> for the climb. Probably technique rather than the car, but I achieved highest position ahead of the others. The Range Rover was last and the driver was not seen in the Interior again. Some years later I used a Nissan Patrol on the same climb but I was never able to reach the heights that I had done with the Hi Lux.

One day in the early 90s I had a phone call from an old colleague who, knowing that the work situation in the Middle East was slowing down, invited me to take up a senior position in a construction company in Botswana in Southern Africa. After a lot of thought, I duly went there, hoping for great things in that large, semi-desert country. Sadly, changes were taking place there also and great things did not materialise. In my position with the company, I was provided with both a Land Cruiser Estate and an Isuzu 1500 Pick up. That Isuzu was a cracking little car, with very good all round performance and I enjoyed driving it very much. At different times, both of my daughters visited the country and used the car while they were there. The elder daughter and her fiancée drove deep into the Okavango Delta with it, and thoroughly frightened themselves when, in fading light, they found that they had driven much too close to the side of a towering herd of elephant. Driving as carefully as possible, they drove away from the herd and departed, but they both admitted afterwards that they would never like to repeat the experience.

Although I had enjoyed working in Botswana, I missed many aspects of the Middle East badly. After a year in Botswana, I decided that I would be better off going back and, after calling various friends, I returned to the Sultanate.

## **St MARY'S ELLESMERE RECYCLING PROJECT**

### **SPRING-CLEANING WITH AN EASTER 'NEW LIFE' MESSAGE**

**Clearing out stuff that's no longer need to give new life elsewhere.**

At St Mary's we are inviting everyone to have a clear-out of Jewellery & Watches, Currency, Mobile Phones, Cameras, Stamps, & Gadgets (details below) to help us raise money for USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel).

Founded in 1701, USPG is the Anglican mission agency that partners churches and communities worldwide in God's mission to enliven faith, strengthen relationships, unlock potential and champion justice. (See [www.uspg.org.uk](http://www.uspg.org.uk) for more detailed information).

<b>Jewellery</b> Unwanted gold & silver including damaged items <b>Costume Jewellery</b> Watches 	<b>Coins &amp; Currency</b> Banknotes & Coins Any currency UK or foreign of any age/unchangeable currency  
<b>Mobile Phones, Cameras &amp; Gadgets</b> Mobile Phones . <b>Video Cameras</b> <b>Old Film Cameras</b> . Digital Cameras . <b>Sat Navs</b> <b>Game Consoles</b> . Games & Accessories . <b>iPods</b> <b>MP3 Players</b> . Tablet Computers 	<b>Stamps</b> Loose / Single Stamps <b>First Day Covers</b> Presentation Packs 

If you have suitable items for recycling, please drop them into the Collecting Box at the back of St Mary's Church , or contact John Vernon (01691 623765 – [revjcv@gmail.com](mailto:revjcv@gmail.com) to arrange collection).

**We will do the rest** (and keep you briefed of progress through the Parish Magazine).

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

Memory 38

### **Schooling Up To The 1950's**

*Remembered by Alison Parker*

For a small town, Ellesmere appears to have had a remarkable number of private schools during the century. The most enduring of these, Ellesmere College, was one of a series of schools founded by the Rev. Woodard in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to make public school education available to all levels of society. While not really achieving this ideal, the foundation endured and Ellesmere College expanded steadily through the century.

At the beginning of the century, all classes were held concurrently in 'Big School', a single large hall, but buildings were rapidly extended to give separate classrooms. A serious fire in the dining hall in 1950 gave the opportunity for substantial rebuilding.

Shortly after World War II, in the redevelopment fever of the time, an Old Boy of the College rescued a fine Schultz organ from a redundant church, in the Tyne Dock district of Newcastle, which was about to be demolished. This organ was re-erected in Big School to become one of the prized possessions of the College.

While essentially a boarding school, day-boys from the surrounding district were accepted. In the 1980's the school recognised the opportunity offered by the rising climate of feminism and accepted girls, firstly in the sixth form and then, within a few years, throughout the school.

Before the Second World War Ellesmere College ran a preparatory school, for future pupils, at the top of St. John's Hill, next to Sheraton House.

There were other schools in this period. One stood on the flat area of The Mount, where St. Mary's Cottage now stands. Another school at 23, Church Street, which stood opposite the Red Lion Hotel, was run by a Miss Bury. There was a Ladies' College, boarding girls, and run by Miss Jones and Miss Smith, but mention of it is confined to the first decade of the century. Miss Ponton ran a preparatory school for girls in Victoria Street in this decade. A Ladies' finishing School was at The Laurels, 77 Scotland Street, near Brett & Collins Garage. It was started as a school for sisters of boys attending Ellesmere College. It took boarders, and was run by a staff of three maiden ladies - Miss H.E.Jones Head Mistress, Miss M.T.Jones Housekeeper, and a cook. It appears to have closed in the late 1920's.

As regards 'State Education', Ellesmere had three schools. The infants (5-7) attended St. Mary's C of E School in the parish room at the junction of Victoria Street and Scotland Street. In 1925, there were three teachers, the head teacher was Miss Matthey, the middle teacher was Miss Halton, and the first year teacher was Miss Nunnerley. The building was of timber construction with walls and roof clad with corrugated iron. Consequently, it was commonly known as 'The Tin School'.

From here, girls went to the Girls' National School in Sandy Lane, and the boys went to the Boys' National School in Wharf Road. Both schools were 19<sup>th</sup> Century foundations of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. The girls had to attend cookery lessons in the Temperance Hall in Cross Street, which stood next to the present Mere Park Financial Services shop on what is now the car park.

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These National Schools took boys and girls up to the age of fourteen - any further education had to be sought in Oswestry or Whitchurch, travelling by rail.

After the Second World War, new schools were built in Ellesmere - the County Primary School in Elson Road and the Lakelands School for education up to the age of sixteen, both schools being coeducational. Further education meant travel to Oswestry, Wem or Whitchurch.

At the end of the century, the buildings of the National Schools still remained. The Girls' School as a derelict private house, and the Boys' School as commercial premises. The Temperance Hall had burnt down and the Tin School was demolished to make way for housing.

At the beginning of the century all children had to attend school until the age of fourteen years.

They were, however, allowed to leave at age twelve if they had sat a special examination and received a certificate stating they had passed the fifth standard. Partial exemption, after the age of twelve, for the purpose of employment only, was subject to the following conditions:-

(1) The Local Authority had to be satisfied that the child would be beneficially employed. Such being the case then -

(2) The child must have a certificate proving that he/she had passed the fourth standard, or -

(3) The child must have a certificate to confirm that he/she had made 300 attendances per year in no more than two schools for five preceding years.

If the child obtained (2) or (3) then he/she only needed to make five attendances per week until the age of fourteen years.

A major call on children's time in those days was, of course, agriculture. After they had reached eleven years of age and passed the fourth standard, parents could give notice that the children were needed to help work on the land. Such children must have made 250 attendances in the period 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> May while between the ages of eleven and thirteen years, and they had to obtain a certificate of proof from the head Teacher each year.

In 1901, Ellesmere Girls' School had 122 pupils with an average attendance of 98. The Boys' School had 136 pupils with an average attendance of 115, and the Infants' School had 117 pupils with an average attendance of 87. Throughout the first decade of the century, there were problems with staff numbers and quality.

Hygiene and temperance gave cause for concern in those early days and in 1910 it was to include lectures on both during school time where possible. In 1913, discussions were held on the provision of a play-ground for the Girls' School, and health problems returned in March 1914 with an outbreak of ringworm and consumption.

Whilst the National Schools Managers were responsible for the three 'state' schools, there was an ongoing and acrimonious debate about whose responsibility it was for the maintenance of the premises. The Education Authority assumed that Lord Brownlow should fund all repairs and he appears to have objected. In November 1925 Lord Brownlow suggested the transfer of the schools to the Church. Eventually, on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1931, the Boys' and Girls' Schools were conveyed to the Lichfield Diocesan Trust, with the Vicar and Church Wardens as the Administrative Trustees.

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At the end of 1934, re-organisation of the schools was debated, but no agreement was reached. Then in 1936 a new Education Act stated that local education authorities were expected to provide Junior Schools for up to the age of eleven years and Senior Schools for eleven to fifteen years. The school leaving age was to be raised to fifteen years.

Finance for the upkeep of the schools was always a problem and caused continual disagreement between the Managers and the Administrative Trustees. The question of liability was settled eventually when counsel's opinion stated that the trustees were responsible. There was obvious relief in 1937 when the Education Authority indicated that a new Council Senior School might be built. In 1938, the Authority stated that a new Junior School could be built within two years.

Then came the 1939-45 World War!

State' schooling therefore, had to continue in the existing buildings and make the best use possible of the poor conditions. Pupil numbers were lower than back in 1901, which was some help. Evacuees coming into the town found schooling different from their home schools, as well as the way of life in the countryside.

In 1939, the Boys' School had 98 pupils in three classes, housed in two rooms. This number included eleven evacuees all classed as 'Private'. The Girls' School had 86 pupils, again in three classes. housed in two rooms. Eight 'Private' evacuees were included.

By 1945, the Boys' School had only 80 pupils. including five evacuees still remaining in June. The Girls' School pupils had reduced also. standing at 81 which included five evacuees. The Infants' School had 61 pupils in three classes.

The evacuees were recorded separately throughout the War period as 'Private and 'Official' The latter also had their place of origin noted. These included Dagenham, Essex; Islington. North London, Southampton; Birkenhead and Wallasey.

As life began to return to more normal ways after the War, it found the schools in a poor state. The boys and girls were still occupying buildings that had been built in the 1840's and the infants in 1895. The new schools were desperately needed. but it was not until 1952 that the new Infants' School and the new Modern School were opened. The latter eventually became the Lakelands School after a bitter struggle.

Further memories of schooling after 1952 will be found in the excellent Lakelands School Millennium book.

The Ellesmere College also has its own records.

## MOTORING MEMOIRS OF CHRIS STRETTON, b1950 Part 7

By chance I was at a party a couple of weeks later where I got chatting to a stranger who, as a sideline, imported Alfas from Holland! Once I had established that these were fully UK spec cars and there would be no warranty issues, I placed my order: a red 156 with the Selespeed gearbox, saving about £4000 on Ashmole's list price!



I loved this car, it's looks, character and drive, but it did live up to the Alfa inherent reputation, which most owners seem to forgive!

The first problem was in February 2001 when I had to travel up to Manchester airport on a Sunday evening for a flight out the next morning. I had just passed Leominster when the oil pressure light came on so I pulled into the adjacent lay-by and opened the bonnet. My torch revealed an engine covered in oil and a big pool developing on the floor... the car wasn't going any further tonight! I was lucky to get a taxi to take me to Manchester and the AA made arrangements for the car to be collected and taken to Ashmole's. The good news was that I both got my flight and that Alfa Romeo repaired it under warranty and reimbursed me for all the additional costs.

The next problem occurred when we were travelling home from Liverpool one Sunday night, always a Sunday! Having come off the Western Point Expressway from Runcorn, we were going up the slip-road onto the M56 when all the gears in the Selespeed box disappeared and I had no drive. The AA got us home on the back of a lorry but it was a long wait and we had to swap lorries at one point.



In 2001 I was now finding the riding position on the CBR getting uncomfortable after a longish ride. I needed a more upright riding position to avoid getting a stiff neck. So, in May, I changed the CBR for a Honda VFR 800.

After my experience with the Alfa I needed more reliability and so bought a Lexus IS200 but only kept it for a year. It was an excellent car but a bit boring and I went back to an Alfa, buying the ex-demonstrator GT from our local garage. This proved to be a great car that gave no problems!



In September 2005 I was invited to go the Goodwood Revival meeting with a friend and would make this a regular venue in future.

July 2007 provided a very special experience. A friend who was a good customer of Aston Martin, had an invitation to visit the Newport Pagnell factory and see the last ever Vanquish being hand made. Icing on the cake was me being invited to drive the DB9 all the way home!

In January 2008 it was getting time to change the Alfa GT and I collected my Skoda Octavia VRs from my local dealer. As was my preference when buying 'new' cars, this was an ex-demonstrator and an excellent car!

Also at this time I finally decided to get a classic car. In the early 1980s I had test driven a Triumph Stag, tempted to buy a classic at that time, but thankfully not doing so as the value bubble broke soon afterwards. This time I was serious and I decided on a Lotus Elan, having fond memories of the one that Dad had owned. I asked my cousin, Martin, to find me one as he is in the business and I was soon at Paul Matty's garage where there were a few to choose from. I had a choice of two and the yellow, MVT893E, was soon bought after a couple of test drives locally and delivered to me soon after by trailer.

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In 2008 I decided to change my motorbike for something a bit more upright and sold the VFR to a friend and bought a BMW F800ST instead.

In September 2011 friend Roger and I had a bit of a special biking trip, going to Ireland. It didn't start well however.

The ferry sailed at 2345h from Fishguard so it was a late departure from home to ride down to the ferry. Roger had a Ducati and its current problem was with the side stand which had broken. There was no centre stand. Trying to fix it before we left, we ran out of time and headed off into the biblical rain.

The crossing gave a bit of time for us to dry out then we disembarked at Rhoslare before heading north, first stop at Glendalough. Stopping required teamwork if Roger couldn't find a wall to lean the bike against. In my pocket I had the foot end of the broken kickstand with a bit of tube to extend it and needed to push this up onto the broken stump for the stand to work! As this was hardly a satisfactory arrangement we were constantly seeking a garage, which we found at Blessington where the welding kit was in action to provide a permanent, extended stand. Visits to the Giant's Causeway, Bushmills Distillery, and other attractions were enjoyed and the roads were excellent for riding.

In June 2014 it was time for the Elan to go and I sold it back to Paul Matty but ended up buying a Mazda MX5 soon after for the open-top driving fun.

In July 2015 we spent the day on the seafront in Swansea enjoying the Wales Airshow. On the beach on the way back to the car I had a phone call from my son asking if I would like a ride in a McLaren! Would I?! A friend of his worked for the company and had been given a 650LT prototype for the weekend on which to put some miles. It wasn't the best time to experience a supercar as the traffic leaving the Airshow was continuous but once on Fairwood Common he could give it a bit of a blast. Great to have experienced this! As you'll have read before, I grew up with Porsches and, having whetted my appetite for classic car ownership with the Elan, it now felt as though I had no choice but to own a Porsche. Just as when I was looking for the Elan, I asked cousin Martin to look out for a 911 for me. Coincidentally he had one for sale at that moment and it was duly bought!

In June I enjoyed a present from my wife. She had booked me a driving experience at Llandow which gave me three laps in each of six cars: BMW i8, Maserati GranTurismo, Ferrari 360, Nissan GT-R, Jaguar F-type, Lamborghini Murcielago. All great experiences but I'd probably have taken the i8 home out of preference. Following the drives, I was then taken on a couple of laps in an Ariel Atom. It was more than somewhat wet at this stage. I was sitting in a pool of water from the off and was sprayed liberally as the driver threw the car sideways around the track!

With the years creeping up and holidays complicated by having a Labrador in the family we decided that a motorhome would be a good addition to the fleet. This has served us well, providing great holidays to Scotland, Ireland and short breaks locally at all times of the year.

For several recent years I had been keen to attend, the Spa Classic Six Hour race weekend but, as it was normally just one week after the Goodwood Revival, this hadn't happened. Having done lots of Revivals, 2016 was time for a change so I booked up with Travel Destinations for a group of friends to go to Spa. We stayed at Hotel Le Val D'Armoy in Malmedy for four nights, not far from the circuit and where another guest had a sister car to mine.

**To be continued in the next issue**

## 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 phoned 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](http://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](mailto: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**

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The  
**Cellar  
Church**  
ELLESMERE

### **Pastor Phil Wright 'The Cellar Church'.**

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

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### **Rev Julia Skitt Ellesmere Methodist Church**

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



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### **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)

