



Probus Club Ellesmere



Covid-19 Lockdown 2021 Newsletter

Issue 38

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Dear all, I hope you are all keeping well, restrictions are starting to relax slightly.

If members are happy by end of we were hoping to start holding face to face meetings with speakers again at the Comrades club.

The committee would like your opinions on this idea, we could hold hybrid meetings with members who wished could see the speaker at the Comrades club we could at the same time show it to members at home via zoom.

To give the committee an idea of how you feel I will send out an email in a week or so and ask for you to vote **Yes** to restart face to face meetings from **August** or **No** to carry on with the zoom meetings.

Best wishes

Paul

Cotswold Way Sponsored Walk

Last year Andrew Thomson, accompanied and assisted by Mary and Lorna, walked over four days from Salisbury to Winchester to raise money for St Mary's, Hordley and the Severn hospice. The result was that about £2,500 was shared between these two charities at a time when fundraising activities were almost impossible to arrange due to the coronavirus restrictions.

A similar walk, this time in the Cotswolds, is planned for the week from 21st to 28th of May. The money raised will be shared between St Mary's church and Marie Curie nurse. If you would like to know more please contact Andrew and Mary by email on

thomsonandrew09@gmail.com or follow the link below

www.uk.virginmoneygiving.com/AndrewThomson56

Speaker's Corner

At our next Probus Zoom meeting on Thursday 20th MAY at 10.30am the speaker will be James Harrison speaking to us about 'The Prison 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.

Views from the Crow's Nest

Dear Probus friends,

As ever I hope that you and your families, friends and neighbours are keeping as safe and well as possible. Covid-19 has brought huge changes to all of our lives but in differing ways. In some ways the



re-evaluation of previous standards and expectations across our society have been 'Yin and Yang'. School memories (I think it was one of Newton's Laws) remind me that 'for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction'. So it seems to be with politics across our world. Yet out of this terrible pandemic we hear stories of how medical advances have been speeded up exponentially, seemingly cutting through previous bureaucratic barriers to simply save lives. People and countries are helping each other in many more new ways. Long may that continue.

A ship in harbour is safe. But that is not what ships Still there will always be challenging differences.

At least we can now travel more freely across the UK and our internal borders are 'softening'. After what seems an age we can start again, those of us that can, to meet up with our loved ones and hopefully give them a hug. Remembering of course that there are some of us who we have sadly lost family and friends in the meantime.

Next week is national Dementia Action Week seeking to raise the awareness of us all to the issues surrounding those who live with dementia and their carers. Let us not forget also those in our community who live with wider physical and mental conditions and their carers, many of whom are both 'invisible' but equally important.

The seas beneath the Crow's Nest seem to be settling and we are all prepared for any next 'squall'. With best wishes to you and yours, stay safe and enjoy the calmer seas ahead hopefully.

Jeremy

Speaker: Susan Ord, "Secrets of handwriting"

Susan talked us through her illustrated PowerPoint presentation, noting that handwriting can reveal how the person was feeling at the time, their mood, character and personality type. Writing can change during the course of the day. It is a useful tool for employers when considering which applicants to select for interview against a job specification.

It is important to be respectful and sensitive when interpreting an individual's handwriting. As children we were generally conditioned to want to please others and were often made to feel 'a failure' if writing was not 'neat'. But what is neat for one person may not be for another. Dyslexia was often not diagnosed so writers with poor spelling or poor motor control (dyspraxia) were often deemed "thick".

For instance, writing can tell graphologists where the writer lies on the spectrum from arrogant/narcissistic to those lacking in confidence and needing reassurance. Characteristics of handwriting including sloping and size can indicate traits.

We then had a short exercise. Susan asked us all to write “the quick brown fox jumped” on a piece of paper. Then she asked us to repeat the wording much bigger and then much smaller than the original. We compared notes afterwards. Some people found it easier to write bigger than smaller and others vice versa. Large writing is a sign of ambition, small writing of modesty and objectivity.

Susan explained in some detail particular interpretations of a variety of handwritings.

[illegible]

Neglected, illegible and disorganised handwriting is likely to belong to someone whose workshop or desk is disorganised, in this case the writer is emotionally stressed. The handwriting improves when the emotional health improves (see the envelope, written a few years later).



Hi Ruth,
I had no idea what a
handwriting for me because
once for me, I had
a very nice letter I was
in a hurry to write it
and I was very busy at
afternoon writing some
after some time to
produce something very
legible. I felt I failed
disaster. The problem is
I found it much more
difficult to make my writing
legible than I did when
on that I'm not.

1411 I C Dide
Orchard House
Grove Lane
Hampton
Cheshire
5414 85Q

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outside the back of the house, Victoria
Central. At the end of the bus parked
the couple for much of the time. Some
had with. The couple for much of the time.
It was a long as 4 to 500 yards.
In a hurry to write it
conformed for sometime in the
I it is not for a little later in the
year, I would like to send them a
Congratulatory card. What is the
demand? Many modern people
are separated for days in bed through
the abundance of employment. Perhaps
not knowing of the problem is
the problem?
I have seen her letters
from the sick bed. In a hurry. She
picked up some bus a month ago & has
touched so much that she has pulled a
chest muscle. Very painful. She has
lost a lot of weight. Her December
least attack & through the T.B. she
contracted & the consequent powerful course
of tablets to cure about a chest
that conformed. This is a special
month in a month. Good luck in
your perfect work responsibilities. At the
end, I think, can still go on. I think
that a little outcome from recent work
in my own hand is back on the ground after
20 years in Sweden. I hope to
keep going. As always. R

The writer with busy, crowded handwriting will also be likely to have a "busy" workshop or desk.



After an interesting range of questions 'from the floor', Jeremy thanked Susan for her very interesting and enlightening talk today and suggested that our Club may well invite Susan back next year for her talk on 'Forensic Document Examination'. Our members gave an on-line round of applause to Susan.

This is a real treat for us as there are very few copies left. So a huge thanks goes to Estelle Parker for giving us permission to publish it.

The Story of The Parish Church of The Blessed Virgin Mary, Ellesmere

First edition May 1995 Fourth (revised) edition July 2003 By Estelle Parker

Our story starts with a finely carved Saxon cross. It was put up on the little' hill- soon to be called Church Hill that rises above the Anglo-Saxon Eli's Mere.

We think it was St. Chad (died 672 when bishop of Lichfield) who brought Christianity here, sending monks to baptize and hold services. There was probably a wooden cross at first, where the people could gather and listen to the monks telling them about the life of Our Lord. Soon the wooden cross was replaced by an elaborately carved stone cross, with interlace patterns and vine scroll, the vine leaves and grapes representing Christ in the Eucharist, nourishing our souls in goodness. Among the intertwining stems, leaves and fruits were carved animals, such as the boar, the symbol of strength to the Anglo-Saxons, and a horse, also used in Anglo-Saxon mythology. (Christian and pagan symbols were often intertwined.) Soon the first church was built, to give protection from the weather and to try to represent on earth the beauty and glory of God in heaven.

We think the church must have been constructed of wood, as in the Domesday survey of 1086 no church is mentioned but Ellesmere had two priests; it was prosperous enough and populous enough to be able to need and support two priests, to serve both Ellesmere and the surrounding hamlets and villages. (Ellesmere stretched a long way: for instance, part of Cockshutt and the area around Newton [Mere] were part of Ellesmere and were given to Haugmond Abbey after the Conquest, and Lee, also belonging to Ellesmere, was given to Shrewsbury Abbey.)

By the 12th century the church was of stone a small Norman church with sanctuary, chancel and nave; and the Saxon cross (unfortunately broken in pieces by then was incorporated in the floor) Ellesmere had been given after the Conquest to Roger de Montgomery, made Earl of Shrewsbury, but after his sons rebelled against the king the lands were confiscated, and Ellesmere became a Crown property. It was sometimes bestowed as a wedding present (as part of the bride's dowry), as, for example, when King Henry II's sister Emma married the Welsh prince Dafydd ap Owain in 1174 and again when the Welsh prince Llywelyn' married the Princess Joan, the natural daughter of King John, early in the 13th century. (There were two 'manors'. in Ellesmere: the Castle and the Church, both with properties and revenues.) Then in 1225 Llywelyn and Joan gave Ellesmere.to the Knights of St. John. (People were far more religious and pious in those days. Life revolved. round the Church and those who could would try to bestow lands or property to the Church for the sake of their souls and to ensure salvation in the life to come.)

This gift, made over in a deed at Ruthin, meant that the rents, tithes, revenues, etc. would now go the Knights of St. John.

A word about the Knights of St. John ...

Even before the First Crusade, 1096 99, the Hospital of St, John of Jerusalem had been built in the Holy Land. It was built and run by a group of monks (brethren) to care for the poor, the sick and the wounded. After the Crusade some of the surviving Crusaders gave the hospital lands and other bequests, and in 1113 the brethren were recognized as an order: the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

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They adopted St. John the 'Baptist as their patron 'saint and their badge was the 8 pointed white cross (later adopted by Malta, after the Knights of St. John were granted the island of Malta for their headquarters in 1530 and the 8 pointed cross became known as the Maltese Cross).

The cross represented the Crucifixion; white stood for purity; the four arms stood for prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude; and the eight points represented the Beatitudes (Blessed are the pure in heart etc.).

There were three groups of brethren in the Knights of St. John - the fighting Knights, the Chaplains and the monastic Brethren who ran and worked in the hospital. The fighting Knight wore a red tunic with a plain white cross over his coat of mail (easy to distinguish in battle), and his banner was a white cross on a red background. The Chaplains and monastic Brethren in the hospital wore a long black cloak with slits for the arms and a white eight-pointed cross on the breast.

It is from the Knights of St. John that the St. John Ambulance Brigade developed and does such good work today.

These Knights became well-known in Britain during the Crusades and people wishing for salvation for their souls bequeathed churches, properties and land in England and Wales, and money, to the Order, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The head of the Order in Britain was the Prior, who had his headquarters in the great Priory of Clerkenwell with its Norman crypt, near the City of London. He organized supplies of armour, woollen cloth and money to be sent to his headquarters and the Hospital of St. John in the Holy Land. (A new and better hospital was built in the 13th century at Acre.)

He had to arrange for shipment, the Order had its own ships and he had to ensure a good supply of horses for the fighting Knights and also to see that there was a constant flow of knights trained and prepared to fight in the Holy Land. In addition, he was responsible for there being sufficient money to equip and maintain the fighting Knights.

Now, late in the 12th century the Knights had been granted land at Dolgynwal in Gwynedd, N. Wales. There they built a hospice (with a sick bay) and a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist and they made a garden for vegetables and for herbs for healing ointments and medicines. It became known as Ysbyty Ifan, The Hospital of St. John. It was on a fairly well used mediaeval road and many travellers and pilgrims passed that way, knowing they would find good hospitality and a bed for the night (and also knowing they would be cared for if they fell sick), Ysbyty Ifan was soon celebrated for its fine hospitality (hospice a place where guests were entertained).

It was in Prince Llywelyn's territories, and Prince Llywelyn and Princess Joan. must have visited it at least once. Then in 1225 Llywelyn and Joan had a deed drawn up at Ruthin, giving the Knights of St. John at Ysbyty Ifan the church of Ellesmere (and its revenues, and the right of advowson) pro salutis anime nostrae (for the good of our soul'). (There is some doubt as to whether Llywelyn had the right of advowson to give, as it was still in the hands of the king in 1221, but Llywelyn either obtained the advowson or felt able to grant it with the church. Eventually the Knights of St. John were confirmed in their grant of Ellesmere church by King Edward II in 1316 when he received from them a 'fine' or payment of £20). (The right of advowson means the right of appointing the parish priest.)

The glebe and tithes in Llywelyn's time made Ellesmere church worth 20 marks (£13 6s 8d; 1. mark = 2/3 of £1: 3 marks = £2) annually. In the next century (1338) the Knights were receiving over three times that amount (£46 13s 4d) plus another £4 in rents, a lot of money.

Land at Halston, near Whittington, had also been granted to the knights of St. John (from the late 12th century). Here, at some date between 1165 and 1187, the Knights of St. John built their preceptor hospice, chapel and farm buildings.

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The hospice contained the great hall, the preceptor's quarters, guest rooms, dormitories and sick bay. A buttery, bake house, cellar and brewhouse were built, and servants' quarters. The farm buildings included a granary, barn and stables, storehouses and a dovecote. A garden was cultivated for vegetables and medicinal herbs (or medicines and ointments) and an extensive estate was run, growing wheat, rye and oats, with a mill to grind the corn.

Halston grew in importance, and the lands of the Order of St. John in North Wales became attached to the Precatory of Halston, instead of Ysbyty Ifan. This meant that the rents and revenues, tithes and glebe money were now collected by Halston, and by 1294 the church of Ellesmere was included in the Bailiwick of Halston and Dolgynwal). With the church of Ellesmere went the rich church manor, the rents and revenues and the great tithe' annually (hay and corn, and hemp and flax) and the revenues from the Court, and from the church, and also the right of advowson. This meant that the Knights of St. John became the Rectors of Ellesmere (they were the Rectors of Kinnerley, too); the rents and revenues etc. went to Halston, and the Prior in the St. John Headquarters at Clerkenwell, London, was the Rector and as such he appointed the parish priests or Vicars of Ellesmere.

The Prior or his representative would be present, splendidly enrobed, in our church at the Institution and Induction of a new Vicar. For nearly three hundred years the Priors of the Knights of the Order of St. John were the patrons of our church, right until the Dissolution.

It was the Knights of St. John who rebuilt and adorned our church, from the late 13th c and especially in the 14th c they undertook a huge building programme here. They rebuilt the chancel and nave, added the transepts, built the Chapel of St. John, their patron saint, on the north side and small chapel to St. Anne on the south side and they constructed the massive piers and buttresses and arches to support the central tower which they then built to crown their work.

They used Grinshill sandstone, and the master mason they appointed would have ridden frequently over to the quarry at 'Grinshill to inspect the stone beds and to provide templates for the stone that was to be worked there and not on the church site. It was easier and cheaper to transport cut stone rather than huge rough pieces, but transport by land was hugely expensive (water transport was used where possible e.g. by river or sea, but stone from Grinshill had always to be carried on land). Carts had to be hired, and ten carts each pulled by eight oxen would not provide a lot of stone. The carriage could be twice the cost of the stone. Oxen were often preferred to horses, for they could give a long and strong steady pull but again many loads of stone were needed, and the transport was costly. The final cutting of the stone was done on the site, with saws, axes, chisels and drills and all the tools needed constant re-sharpening, which took up time and added to the cost.

The Preceptor (Chief Knight) of Halston would ride over to inspect the progress of the building work and to confer with the master mason, and perhaps with the other stonemasons and wood carvers. A temporary thatched building was erected next to the Site probably on the south side here and this was the stonemasons' lodge. There the cutting masons would be protected from the weather as they worked on the stone, and they also used the lodge as a place to sit and eat their breakfast and their lunch. At night their tools were put away there and the door fastened.

No-one ever lived in the lodge, the stonemasons lodged in the town as they do to this day, and they had to buy their own food (except on feast days). (If food was supplied the wages were lower.)

The men were given their work clothes: hoods, gloves, boots, for wet and cold weather and straw hats for the summer.

More of the history of the church in the next issue

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES

THE ELLESMERE MANUSCRIPT

Canterbury Tales is one of the most celebrated works of literature of the Middle Ages. It was written by Geoffrey Chaucer, then in London in about 1343. His father, John Chaucer, was prosperous, a London vintner. His mother, Agnes de Copton, had ley of her own, and John and Agnes were able to give their son Geoffrey a good education, with Latin and a good deal of French. He'd have been taught largely in French, Old French, not quite the French of today. By the end of his life English would become the language used in teaching. He became a page in the household of Elizabeth, Duchess of Clarence and Countess of Ulster who was the wife of King Edward III's son, Lionel, Duke of Clarence.

Working and travelling in royal households greatly enhanced his education, and also enabled him to meet the young lady who would eventually marry; Philippa de Roet, lady-in-waiting to queen Philippa, wife of Edward III. After Queen Philippa died Philippa de Roet became lady-in-waiting to the wife of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, another son of Edward III. Geoffrey Chaucer was made a squire and served in Edward III's army in France in 1359. He was captured during the siege of Reims and the king himself contributed the large sum of £16 towards ransom. He served in further expeditions in France before accompanying the Black Prince to Spain, and he became a negotiator on diplomatic missions in Italy in 1372 and 1378.

At home he was appointed Controller of Customs and Subsidy of Wools, Skins and was in the Port of London from 1374 for twelve busy years. He became Clerk of the King's Works until 1392 and in this capacity oversaw the administration of the king's building and repair projects. This included construction work by the Tower of London, and the extension of the wharf from St. Thomas's Tower eastwards completed with many river-front buildings. Some of this work recently came to light in excavations (March 2004). Chaucer also became a Justice of the Peace and a Knight of the Shire. throughout his very active life and with all the work he was called on to do he still read widely and he wrote poetry, such as *The book of the Duchess*, *The House of Fame*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*.

When he was about forty he started work on *The Canterbury Tales* work begins with a lively description of an assorted group of pilgrims riding together from Southwark to Canterbury, to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in the cathedral there. This descriptive Prologue, with each character succinctly drawn with irony and humour, is followed by the tales the pilgrims tell to entertain themselves as they travel. Chaucer drew on his wide experience of life gained from the many offices he held in the King's service at home or abroad to portray a whole range of characters: the knight, the young squire, the prioress, the Wife of Bath, the monk, the miller, the franklin, the physician, the friar. It is a remarkably detailed picture of fourteenth century life, and it is much more than that: all humanity is here, with its virtues and vices, peculiarities, vanities and qualities, which make it one of the great books of literature.

Chaucer composed and revised this work for about thirteen years, until his death in about 1400.

It was of course written all by hand. No manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales* in Chaucer's own hand is known to have survived, but his works were copied out and circulated in various versions.

The most beautiful of these manuscripts was written in London soon after Chaucer's death. It consists of two hundred and forty large leaves of parchment, each one written very neatly by hand which of course would have taken a very long time and much patience and concentration.

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Many of these leaves are finely embellished, again all laboriously by hand, with coloured borders of flowers and leaves along the top and the bottom and on the left-hand side of each page. Many of the large capital letters are illuminated, and hundreds of smaller capitals are also in colour and decorated with gold leaf an amazing amount of skilful and painstaking work. The splendour of these pages is further enriched with no fewer than twenty-three portraits of the thirty or so pilgrims, including one of Geoffrey Chaucer himself. The pilgrims are all mounted, on horses of varying quality and condition. The possession of a work of such richness and beauty would have greatly enhanced the image of its owner and yet we do not know with certainty who that first owner was. Certainly, it would have been a person of position and wealth to commission such a fine work of literature and art. We do know that the manuscript passed through various hands including those of John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, via his guardians Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, and John, Duke of Bedford. It was acquired by the Drury family and others, and eventually in the sixteenth century by Roger, Lord North, who was Treasurer of the Household to Queen Elizabeth 1.

It then came into the possession of Lord North's colleague Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal (i.e. Lord Chancellor) to Elizabeth 1. Sir Thomas was a celebrated bibliophile, building up a fine collection of books and manuscripts. (He read them too: he had a special travelling case made to carry books when on his travels.) He also bought some landed estates. In 1600 he bought the Ellesmere estate which had been in the hands of the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, since the marriage of the Stanley heir to the Le Strange heiress Joan in the late fifteenth century. The Le-Stranges had been Lords of Knockin and Ellesmere and Myddle. He bought the land from Alice, Dowager Countess of Derby, Lady Le Strange, the widow of the fifth Earl of Derby, who wished to sell it and soon afterwards he married her. He also bought estates which had belonged to Ellesmere Church before the Dissolution chantry lands and Knights of St. John land, and with the latter came the advowson the right to appoint a priest here when the next vacancy occurred, an occasion that did not arise in his lifetime but did in his son's. (The family continued as patrons of this church until the last century.) When King James 1 made Thomas Egerton Lord Keeper of the Great Seal (Lord Chancellor) as had Elizabeth 1 before him, for his services were valuable and much prized, he granted him a title and Sir Thomas Egerton chose that of Lord Ellesmere after his newly acquired estates here. The name of this little Shropshire town would then become well-known in royal, legal and literary circles. Sir Thomas continued to collect fine books and manuscripts and added to his magnificent library the Chaucer manuscript he had acquired from his colleague Lord North. The beauty and richness of this manuscript made it one of the finest jewels of his collection, and it became known as the Ellesmere Manuscript.

After his death Sir Thomas's son John was granted eventually the earldom which James 1 had promised to his father as a reward for all his work. John became the first Earl of Bridgewater (chosen because Bridgewater was under the patronage of the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal).

He continued to add to his late father's library and this collection became known as the Bridgewater Collection. This very valuable library remained in the family right until 1914, when it had to be sold in order to pay huge death duties. The entire Ellesmere/Bridgewater Collection was bought by Henry E. Huntington for his library in California, and there it can be seen today. The treasured Chaucer manuscript, on which many Chaucer texts are based, has become known world-wide as the Ellesmere Manuscript, or the Ellesmere Chaucer. This little Shropshire town had given its name not only to a title but also to a manuscript celebrated throughout the world for its beauty and its wonderful work of literature.

My last years of overseas motoring: Part 12 by Brian Rodgers

I returned to Oman with an American pipeline construction company. The company had always been known for its bright red vehicles, whether private cars, oilfield trucks or pipeline construction machines. Pipelines are built along the straightest routes, and our work was almost entirely over undeveloped terrain where 4x4 vehicles were a must. Initially I was given a monstrous Chevrolet Suburban station wagon. With its 6¼ litre, naturally aspirated diesel engine, and 3-speed slush-pump transmission, it was no ball of fire. Add the sloppy suspension, steering that had a ½ turn free play, and it was hardly enjoyable motoring. However, it was reliable and took me deep into the different parts of the Interior. Fortunately, additional equipment was coming into the Sultanate from company operations elsewhere in the Gulf. Included were several Japanese 4x4s and I was given a Nissan Pathfinder; not red but in bright white paintwork. In those days Pathfinders were much smaller than the present models and had only a 4 cylinder, 2.4 litre petrol engine, but that provided it with very reasonable performance. What a pleasant relief that car was after the Suburban. I kept the Pathfinder for over four years and I really enjoyed it. It was very reliable and its go anywhere abilities were quite amazing. With suitable tyres it could tackle most types of terrain and, particularly, during the floods of 1996/7, it took me through some very deep wadis. Sadly, after it had covered some 200,000 kilometres, problems started. Late one summer afternoon, when the outside temperature was about 50°, the engine died suddenly, when I was still over 100 km from home. I found that the problem was electrical but I was unable to rectify it. I most certainly did not relish the prospect of spending the night in the car. No engine meant no air conditioning, and with an ambient temperature that would stay about 40°, and with only about 5 litres of drinking water, I was not very happy. Fortunately, just before sunset a large desert truck from another company came along and I flagged it down. Unusually, the driver did not have a mate with him and I managed to squeeze into the passenger seat amidst tools and spares. It might not have been a comfortable ride back to base but it was certainly very much better than spending a night in the car in the desert. Next morning our auto-electrician sorted the problem in no time. The car then carried on working normally until one morning a few months later. I was in a hurry to attend a meeting in another oil company concession, about 150 km away and, approximately half way, when I looked at the instruments, I saw that the needle of the water temperature gauge was at the top of the scale. I stopped immediately and on opening the bonnet I heard an ominous hissing. A quick check revealed a crack in the upper radiator hose, from which very hot steam was issuing. I had no alternative but to stop there in the middle of nowhere and wait for the engine to cool. Alas, even then there was nothing I could do, because the cooling system had emptied itself and I had only a small amount of drinking water with me. Eventually, an Omani in a Land Cruiser pick up (the ubiquitous replacement for the camel) stopped and gave me a lift to a drilling rig. From there I was given another lift to my destination, where the meeting had long since finished. This time the car required more work than had been the case with the previous problem, because the head was warped. Eventually it was back on the road but now I felt that I could not rely on it the 100% that is most necessary deep in the desert. I checked with our mechanical people to see what else might be available and I selected a Mitsubishi Pajero. However, I did not forget the very good service the Pathfinder had given me and I remembered an incident with it that was not at all amusing at the time but, on reflection, is highly amusing now. I was travelling to Muscat on a warm afternoon, looking forward to having a few cold beers that evening in town.

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I was on the main road, near the Interior town of Izki when, suddenly, without any forewarning, a traffic police corporal (military ranks there) came out from the side of the road immediately in front of me and waved me to stop. I was travelling at about 100 km/h and when I braked hard, the rough terrain tyres had no grip at all on the polished road surface and they shrieked loudly as the wheels locked up (no ABS). My last view of the corporal was of him diving over the parapet wall at the roadside as I skidded past and came to a stop about 20 metres beyond him. I pondered driving on but knew that a police car would soon be on my tail and so I reversed back. The very irate policeman was waiting for me and he accompanied me to the local police station. There, he claimed that I had tried to kill him, and I anticipated a long stay in the station. By luck, a police captain came in and, after listening to my story, he asked why I had been driving at high speed when there was a police 50 km/h notice on the road. I insisted that there had been no notice and, after some discussion, we all went to check. There we found that there was a sign but it had been blown or knocked over and was lying face down on the verge. I was released then but given a very strong warning about driving too fast. Whatever, I shall always remember the sight of the very scared police corporal taking his high speed dive over the parapet wall.

Unusually in the Middle East, the Pajero had a diesel engine. Since fuel there is so cheap (bottled water costs more per litre) I could not understand the reason for having a diesel vehicle. The explanation was that, for a given tank size the diesel has a much greater range, and this was an advantage on our pipeline work. With a 2.8 litre turbo engine, the Pajero was no ball of fire and the car was nowhere near as nippy as the Pathfinder, as I found one day when overtaking in a tight situation on a main road. However, it was the top of the range model, with sprung driver and front passenger seats, plus velour upholstery, and my wife always found it very comfortable on her visits.

One plus mark that that vehicle had was its ability to ford deep water. On one of my wife's visits, we were returning from the Interior, going to Muscat where she was due to board her flight back to Britain that night. The weather across the desert had been pleasantly sunny but as we approached the mountain range to the south of Muscat, I noticed some very heavy clouds building up over the peaks. Sure enough, when we reached the main road by the foothills, the rain had started and already water was flooding down the gulleys on the mountainsides.

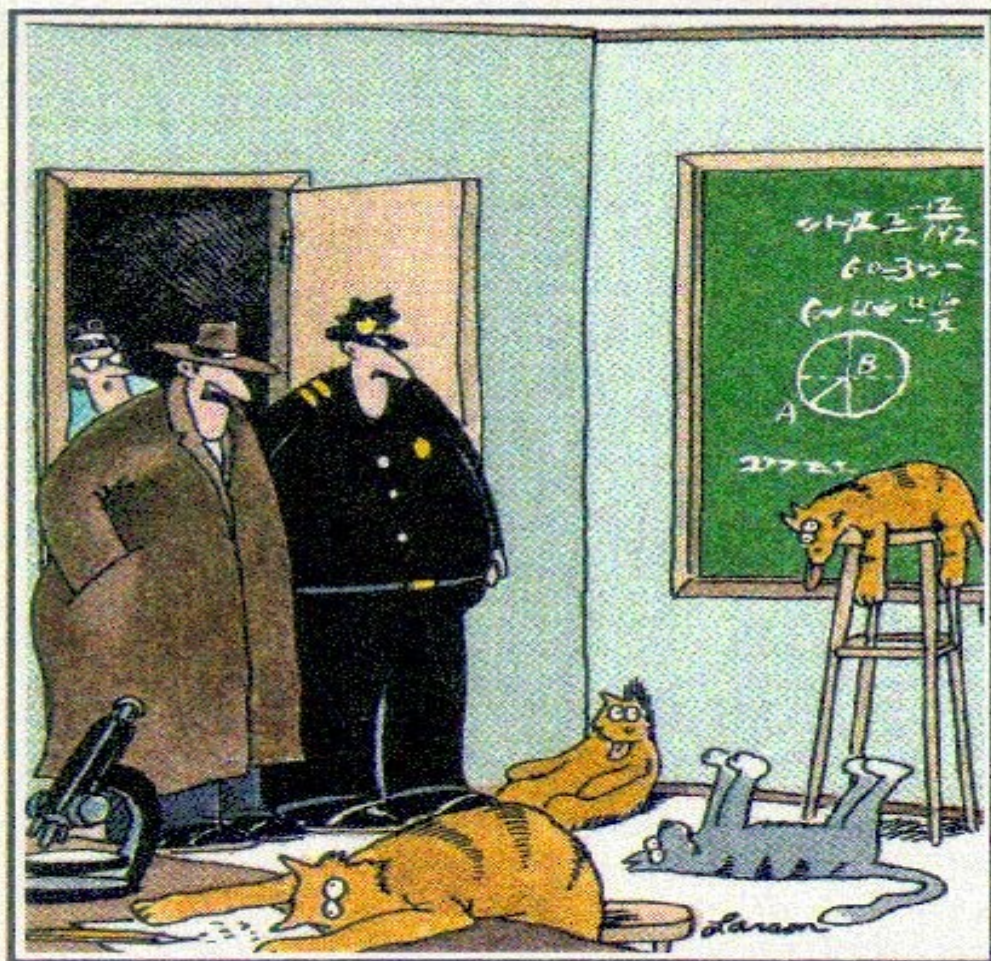
At the first major wadi crossing the water was already 30 cm deep and it was carrying considerable debris. As I entered the wadi I saw a large date palm trunk heading towards us. I accelerated hard and avoided being struck by the trunk by inches. The next crossing was already well under water and I was reluctant to try to cross. However, we needed to reach Muscat and I drove on very gently. The designers of the Mitsubishi sensibly have the engine air intakes mounted very high but I am still amazed that we managed to get through because water was lapping over the front of the engine cover. At about three quarter way through, water must have entered the electrical system because, suddenly, all the warning lights on the instrument panel came on, some flickering and others on full. Regardless, the car carried on right through and, gradually, as I accelerated away, all the lights went out.

The final crossing was a very different matter. This was downstream from the others and when we arrived at it, water was flowing across the road at considerable speed. There was a long queue of vehicles standing there, but eventually, after discussions with their drivers, two military 4x4 trucks were driven over without any problem. Next a bus driver decided that he could manage with his empty 56-seater and he drove in at some speed.

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He did have problems. The flood waters forced up against the body skirt between the front and back wheels, and his tail end slewed across until he was probably 15-20° out of line. However, foot hard on the throttle, he managed to drive through. Next a military Land Cruiser went over without too much trouble and then it was our turn. Low range 2nd gear at 1500 rpm and in we went. The water splashed right up to window level on my wife's side of the car and I could feel the car trying to break away but we made it. As we drove out my wife's face was a picture – as grey as I had ever seen it. Her only comment was "I don't want ever to have to do that again!"

The end of that car for me started when a water hose cracked. The ominous hissing rather than the temperature gauge told me what was happening. Fortunately, the head was not warped and so it was refitted. Although a new cam belt was fitted, for some reason, the balancer shaft drive belt had not been changed. A few months later, during another of my wife's visits, we were driving into the Interior one morning when there was a loud clunk from the engine. I declutched and, because there was no power steering, I knew that the engine had stopped. On the roadside I opened the bonnet and looked inside but nothing out of the ordinary was to be seen. I tried the starter but the engine was solid. After a long wait we were given a lift back to base by a bedu, and the car was towed in later. When the engine was opened up, the shop foreman found it to be in a bad way. The balancer shaft drive belt had broken and it had become tangled with the cam belt, and valves and pistons had collided. That was the end of the Pajero for me but, by good luck, the company had a better and bigger vehicle available, and I shall write about that later.



"Notice all the computations, theoretical scribblings, and lab equipment, Norm. ...
Yes, curiosity killed these cats."

The Series of Memories of Ellesmere Residents Extracts from book 6 of the "Memories"

Booklets Published in early 2000 by the Ellesmere Society

Memory 39

The Canal In The First Half Of The 20th Century

Remembered by Perter Shephard

By the beginning of the century the canal's importance as a commercial thoroughfare was dwindling, but there was still considerable activity. The reason for its demise was, of course, the railway, but ironically, the railway was also its salvation. Back in the mid 19th century, many railways bought up competing canals and then neglected them deliberately, but the Ellesmere canal was more fortunate. Although acquired by the Shropshire Union Railways and Canal Company in 1846, the new company's attempt to drain the canal and run a railway along its bed failed, so they leased it to the London and North Western Railway Company. There was then fierce competition between the major railway companies which forced the independent companies in Wales to join up their lines, eventually being amalgamated into the Cambrian Railway system. As the L.N.W.R. did not have a railway supplying the area to Welshpool, they maintained the canal in an efficient state in order that it might compete with the Welsh railways.

This policy ensured the survival of the Ellesmere canal for almost another century, although with ever diminishing returns. Bradshaw's "Canals and Navigable Rivers", published in 1904, gives us some idea of the situation on the canal at the start of the century. It stated that whilst there was a fair trade on the main navigation from Aldersley Junction to Ellesmere Port, "the general trade on the remainder of the system is not great". It goes on to comment that "The available draught of water is somewhat less than that prevailing generally on narrow boat canals, but the works are well maintained". In 1907, the company told a Royal Commission that in view of fierce competition, it could not foresee any great expansion in its traffic in the future. In fact, the company would continue carrying commercial loads in its own boats for another fourteen years.

To enter the wharf, boats passed under the "White Bridge", the roving bridge built to allow horses to cross over at the junction, still in use today. But immediately on the right, just beyond the bridge, was a two storey building containing a boat dock. This appears to have had several uses. At one time it contained a small boat building concern; at another time it was the property of the Bridgewater Estate and housed the estate barge. Finally it was used by the boat club as their boathouse and members would row on the canal to Frankton or past the meres to Whixall Moss. Around 1950, the club ceased operations and the building was demolished during Whitsuntide 1951. The boat dock can still be seen. Continuing up the wharf the boats would pass the gas works and the dairy building. It was towards the end of the 1914-18 war that the old foundry (Clay's Ironworks)

At the terminal basin stood the crane and warehouse with its old lettering on the end wall, as seen today. Beyond the warehouse was a coal yard and then a smaller warehouse with a smaller crane in front of it. All craft were horse-drawn and there were stables at the head of the wharf attached to the Wharf Tavern, run by Mrs. Bailey in 1900. This stabling was not always adequate for the number of horses and some had to be taken to other taverns in the town.

Beech house, the original canal office standing at the junction, was already converted to a private residence. The canal depot alongside was much alive, employing up to some twenty men in servicing a large area of the canal. Lock gates weighing several tons being made from English oak and strengthened with iron would have been seen. The dry dock was used for the repair of barges and other vessels. Dominating the scene was a massive structure for the overhead travelling crane.

Cont. page 12

The uprights consisted of tall square-sectioned baulks of timber supporting equally large beams fixed horizontally. One such structure ran down each side of the yard until it overhung the water of the canal, giving the effect of a colonnaded avenue. Power was obtained from an old Cornish engine of great age. Then in the 1940's it was changed for an engine that came from Crewe. It was rather unusual, being adapted from a locomotive, the cylinder and piston being mounted vertically. Many a barge was built or repaired at the depot in bygone days, but this dwindled, and the type of craft usually seen at this time would be a maintenance boat built of iron, as still used on the canal today.

Because the waterway was busy with agricultural traffic, it had often been described as the "farmers' canal". Grain was always an important cargo and at the beginning of the century much of this was imported through Ellesmere Port and destined for animal feeding. One of the major grain users was Messrs. A. and A. Peate Ltd. of Maesbury Mill. Until 1921 their grain was carried to them by the canal company's own boats, but when that ended, Peate's bought a fleet of eleven narrow boats from the canal company. These boats would often be seen in the wharf.

Cheese was another product carried by boat. Up to the 1914-18 war there were frequent cheese fairs in Ellesmere when there would be vehicles stretching from the church to the market place, waiting for cheeses to be bought. Many cheeses were dispatched by canal to Liverpool and other towns en route and this commodity usually received priority treatment and was dispatched by "Fly boats". These were barges of lighter build which travelled fast, having the right of way at bridges and locks. They worked continuously, having a double crew. Two men would work by day and two by night, only stopping at locks or when changing horses. A peculiarity of the cheese boats was the use of a top cloth painted with white lead, the light colour of which helped to reflect the sun's heat away from the hold.

The main reason for the building of the canal was the farmers' need of fertilizer. In the 19th century it appears that this was limited to lime obtainable from the Welsh rocks. The canal enabled the lime to be distributed far more easily and a great many limekilns were built at strategic points along the canal. By the 1900's that form of cargo had all but disappeared, but the quarried rock was suitable for road building. The narrow boats continued to bring loads down the canal, from the Vron Wharf, well into the 20th century, the demand grew steadily. Granite was also transported in the form of setts, small blocks of stone used to pave the streets of towns such as Birmingham and Wolverhampton, Fred Leese, a canal company boatman, described the trade as "stones down and mixed goods back". Coal brought down from the upper reaches of the canal in the 19th century was then mainly for the lime burning, but as the demand for such coal declined there were other canal-side industries in the early 1900's that relied on water transport for their coal requirements.

The town's gas works on the wharf were very important customers. In 1923 two or three boats would come through Ellesmere on their way to the Prees branch each week to unload coal at Dobson's bridge. Even in the 1930's a few locally owned boats laden with coal could still be seen.

Timber had been a very important cargo in the 19th century but declined during the early 1900's, but even in the 1920s as a commercial carrier, and the canal boats were taking the "deadly" cargo to the 1900's, the boats of the bye-trader, J. L. Thomas, could still be seen carrying oak from Welshpool to Walsall, there to be used in the manufacture of railway wagons! Matters seem to have come full circle.

The railway saved the canal in the mid 1800's; now it was about to cause its complete demise as a commercial carrier, and the canal boats were taking the "deadly" cargo to them!

More in the next issue

MOTORING MEMOIRS OF CHRIS STRETTON, b1950 Part 7

My cousin Martin was competing in the Six Hours race, co-driving with one of his clients, Tony Wood in a Ford GT40. Martin had already won on four occasions but was not to win again as Tony had a small crash which meant they had too much time to make up and only finished second.



The weekend was excellent with 'access all areas'. We walked around the whole track and some of the memorable images were the glowing brake discs as the cars slowed for corners in the dark. For one race I was standing on the side of the grid as the race started!

On the Monday we went to see the Spa Circuit Museum before a few of us headed off to Stuttgart for part two of the holiday.

I had previously arranged accommodation at the Ibis Stuttgart Airport Messe, Leinfelden and visits to both the Mercedes and Porsche museums and factory tours.

These events were outstanding, there being only one hiccup. Having driven the 911 all the way back to its birth-place I obviously wanted a photo

in front of the Museum where there is a clear space for this. Having driven onto this a jobsworth headed my way to tell me to move! Thankfully I did manage to get the picture. On return home I responded to a request for feedback on the museum visit, complaining of how I had been



dealt with outside. I had a very apologetic letter, free tickets for another visit and a book in compensation.



One day at the end of April in 2017 I was in Swansea and called in at Sinclair VW to enquire about a Golf GTi. I had fancied one of these for a while and enquired whether they could find me an ex-Demonstrator in the next few months. The Salesman pointed to the carpark saying that, by chance, this was a good time to call as they had a 40th Anniversary Limited Edition one available right now with 4000 miles on the clock and a consequent good price. This was in as-new condition and too good to miss so this was my next car but would later become a casualty of Covid-19. Although I dearly wanted to keep this car it just was not getting used and there was little prospect of so doing for many months to come. It had to go and I sold it back to the dealer in Swansea from where I had bought it.

That's about it for now. Covid-19 lockdown is stopping us doing all those things that have previously been available to us and that have allowed me to collect a lifetime of memories, of which this contains just a few. I've been very fortunate to have lived my life when I did and just hope to be able to make some more memories for more years to come.

Chris Stretton
January 2021

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

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)

