



Probus Club Ellesmere



Covid-19 Lockdown 2021 Newsletter

Issue 32

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From the Editor

Dear all,

I hope you are all keeping well, I expect most of you will have had your Covid vaccination by now, if you haven't been asked to book an appointment for one by now please contact your GP surgery, I think that is the same message for patients in Wales.

If you have a story to tell please send it to me and I will put it in the newsletter, I am always looking for articles to publish.

I hope you enjoy this weeks offering.

Best wishes

Paul

Speaker's Corner

At our next Probus Zoom meeting on Thursday 18th February at 10.30am will have a speaker from 'Humanimals trust'.

"Humanimal Trust" drives collaboration between vets, doctors and researchers so that all humans and animals benefit from sustainable and equal medical progress but not at the expense of an animal's life. This is One Medicine.

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 us know and we will talk you through the process.

Brexit explained by Mr Humphries

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFBgQpz_E80

This will make you look twice



Dear Probus friends, as ever I hope that you, yours, your friends and neighbours are keeping as safe and well as possible as the world around us seems to be becoming more hopeful than it has for some time. The local vaccination centres seem to be operating with military precision and that brings confidence. It is difficult to believe that we are virtually 12 month in to this global pandemic with all of its' implications and impacts.

Those of our members living with ongoing or new medical conditions are much in our minds, please keep



I thought the Sputnik was launched in 1957, is that it's booster?

our Almoner Fred Williams in touch if you have any news in that respect. On a positive note it was good to take part in the annual one-hour RSPB 'Birdwatch' the weekend before last. We had wren, chaffinch, blue-tit, coal-tit, jackdaw, collared dove, wood pigeon, blackbird, dunnoek and hedge-sparrows.

One local jackdaw has learned to imitate the call of a greater-spotted woodpecker which is quite comical and confusing to the other jackdaws. The daffodils are now in flower in our garden to compliment the snowdrops, uplifting the spirits.

The only downside for me of Spring is that the blasted grass is starting to grow again and although I know many

like mowing, it is my least enjoyable chore.

Thank you to everyone who is helping out with ferrying people to and from the vaccination centres and helping each other out during this ongoing lock-down and shielding time. I keep seeing articles saying that a flip-side of this pandemic is that many folks have been given an enforced opportunity to re-evaluate what is important in life, especially those who have been trapped on a hamster-wheel of over-busy-ness. I do feel strongly though for all those whose hard-earned businesses/jobs have been or are becoming a casualty. In that respect we are fortunate to be retired.

Let us hope that the snows remain at bay over the next few weeks. In the meantime I am delighted to be able to welcome two new members to our Club, Mrs Meg Wilkes from Ellesmere who many of you probably know and Jo Jutson from St Martins. Please continue to encourage others to join us if you can and invite friends to have a look at our excellent website (thanks Paul) to have a taster.

Stay safe and well and let's all try to stay positive as the days get longer.

With very best wishes,

Jeremy

Tribute to Roy Allen



Roy Lance Allen was born in Bristol, in the summer of 1930. Within a couple of years he had a brother, Donald. His early years were shadowed by two tragedies, the death of his younger brother from Meningitis and the death of his father in a road traffic accident.

Despite these early sad setbacks, Roy together with his mother, showed early evidence of that quiet determination and outer calm which has guided and supported both family, friends and work colleagues through challenging events and times. Christian faith played an important part in Roy's upbringing, Roy enjoyed singing hymns and had a rather good tenor voice.

His intelligence and academic talents assured him a place at grammar school in Bristol. He met Molly, his future wife, at a friend's birthday gathering when they were seventeen, from that moment she became the woman with whom he wished to spend the rest of his life. It was discovered subsequently, that not only were they only a few weeks apart in age but they were registered on the same day with only one baby between them; a close relationship from the outset! After the early bloom of romance, their relationship became a long distance one, as Roy spent his National Service in Gibraltar as a dental assistant in the army. This was to be the first of much overseas travel which coloured and enriched his life.

On his return to the UK, he entered Bristol University where he studied Chemistry, his successful completion of this degree was followed by a PhD in Chemistry and an offer of post doctoral research at Indiana State University in the USA. Roy worked in many part time and holiday jobs to support himself while he studied, at one stage he had four jobs in addition to his studies. The most notable of these was as a railway porter at Bristol Temple Meads station, the proceeds from which went towards the purchase of Molly's engagement ring. During these many and varied employment opportunities, he saw much of life and this contributed to his great sense of fairness and willingness to facilitate opportunity for others. This was much remarked upon in later years by people who worked with him.

Roy and Molly were married in April 1954 while Roy was still studying at university, relying on Molly to support them, which she did by working as a personal secretary in a publishing and printing firm. Indeed, her salary slip showed Roy as her dependant; in the 1950's this rather modern outlook caused much amusement in Molly's place of work and their social circle!

1956 saw them depart from Avonmouth docks, as passengers on a cargo vessel bound for the USA, for the post doctoral research opportunity Roy had secured. They stayed in the USA for three years, during which time they did much travelling around America. It was here in Bloomington Indiana, that their first child Caroline was born. They made many friends while in the states with whom they remained in touch, some right up until this year.

Roy and Molly returned to England aboard the Queen Mary and Roy began work at Shell's Thornton Research facility, which is now part of Chester University. Initially, they rented a portion of the Rectory in Pulford, their second daughter Debbie was born during this period. Roy and Molly purchased their first family home in Gresford shortly thereafter. They quickly made good and lasting friendships amongst the other young families in the neighbourhood. Contact with some of these neighbours remains and when replying to communications regarding Roy's death, one of them wrote back with an amusing story of how Roy and two of the others had joined forces to purchase a ladder; these three graduates had calculated the size of ladder required and when it arrived it was simply enormous, only suitable for a commercial building setting!

Roy travelled abroad frequently on business trips, sometimes for extended periods of time while he was based at Thornton and Molly cared for the family at home; later their third daughter Rebecca was born. Following this in 1968, Roy moved to Shell Centre in London, as he continued to further his career. The subsequent family homes in Hertfordshire then Bedfordshire, became not just the centre of family life but also a place where work colleagues and friends enjoyed their hospitality. Roy and Molly made great efforts to help the families of work colleagues from other areas of the UK and indeed from other countries, feel settled and welcome.

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Over this time in the Home Counties, Roy would often surprise his family with a spontaneous purchase or two! He would go shopping for the more mundane items and sometimes come back with a quite different purchase, such as a new car! This optimistic and warm side of his personality, together with his pleasant humour, has been much commented on in the many lovely letters his family have received from work colleagues and friends after they received the sad news of Roy's death.



He remained part of this community of colleagues, both from Thornton, where he subsequently returned to in 1984 to head Fuel Research and Development for Shell UK, as well as Shell Centre, London.

As a father, Roy was ever loving, supportive and non judgmental. He was philosophical regarding his daughters' scrapes and always tremendously proud of their achievements. He was particularly good at listening, ever prepared to regard something from the other person's perspective. This together with his kindness and warm sense of humour, made him an absolutely wonderful father. To Roy and Molly family was the most important aspect of life, they have seven wonderful grandchildren and from Caroline's children, Molly and Roy welcomed the arrival of their first great grandchild with much joy; Roy went on to welcome a further three great grandchildren. They were both tremendously loved and respected by all their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Roy and Molly moved from Chester to Ellesmere in 1991 after retirement from Thornton, they lived in Ellesmere for nearly thirty years. They made many new friends locally and enjoyed the company of their close neighbours. Roy was a keen member of Chirk golf club where he became Seniors' captain.

He and Molly enjoyed many golfing holidays with their friends in Spain, a happy time for them both.

Roy became an active member of Ellesmere Probus, he served on the committee and at one point became President. At Probus he enjoyed the company of his fellow members and good friends, as well as the stimulation of the various lectures and activities.

Roy and Molly celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary in 2014 with the whole extended family, who gathered at the Grosvenor for the weekend to celebrate. Sadly, the unexpected death of Molly in December 2015, was a significant blow to all of the family, especially of course to Roy. Roy responded with stoicism and dignity, managing the deep sadness for the loss of his life partner by continuing to support his family and learning new skills. He learned how to cook and run the house which had always been managed so expertly by Molly.

Roy celebrated his 90th birthday in July 2020. Unfortunately, due to the arrival of COVID, the planned family celebration was not possible, instead the family organised a Zoom celebration in which all the family took part; it was a joyful if socially distanced occasion!

Roy was always positive and made great efforts despite several health challenges and multiple surgeries. He remained independent and socially active until the last few months of his life. One of his great interests was current affairs, about which he engaged in lively debates until very recent times. He was a kind, warm, intelligent, dignified and courageous man who is such a loss to his family, friends and colleagues.

Probus Club Ellesmere, Zoom meeting Thursday 04 February 2021.

Speaker: Pam Hillier, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire (SSC) Blood Bikes.

Twenty-five of our members were able to join us for this event. Jeremy welcomed everyone thanking everyone for their recent subscriptions and annual contribution of £6.00 to Comrades Club membership. He said that he was delighted to announce a new member, Mrs Meg Wilkes.

The members present added their congratulations to Peter Roth on his birthday yesterday.

Jeremy asked that, although not compulsory, it would be good (as with many other Probus Clubs) for us to have a register of the birthdates of our members and, where appropriate, their spouses/partners so that we can in future recognise those in our Newsletters at the time.

Speaker: Jeremy then introduced Pam Hillier from SSC Blood Bikes as our speaker for the morning.

Pam introduced herself as a Controller of the charity and gave an introductory video explaining the work and structure. Blood Bikes is a life-saving group of volunteers, there are no paid employees. They service NHS hospitals, hospices, Community Nurses and milk-banks (of which there are around 20 across the UK) for instance at short notice. The NHS would otherwise have to engage taxis at substantial cost. SSC received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Services recently.

There is no charge to the NHS or others, no 'blue-lighting' and the service is limited to 'urgent' and 'very urgent' issues rather than 'emergencies'. SSC Blood Bikes

operate 24/7, 365 days per year over four regions: North Staffs, East Staffs, Shropshire and Cheshire.

The motorcycle riders work on shifts of around six hours and there are four on call at any given time plus one Controller. They cover 3,600 square miles servicing 30-40 hospitals, GP surgeries, hospices, care homes and domestic residences etc.

Fundraising is a real challenge especially the past year under Covid-19 restrictions.

The idea was started in 1962 by Margaret Ryerson in Surrey. Her husband was a GP and their son a keen biker. Over time the initiative expanded to 32 organisations in mainland UK plus Northern Ireland and Eire. SSC started in 2014 but is one of the biggest with 370 volunteers.

The charity mainly collects and delivers life-saving products on high-visibility motorcycles, Yamaha FJR 1300cc's and BMW 800cc's. Blood-banks, pathology labs, maternity units, oncology departments and community nurses are examples of who benefits.

Milk-banks provide urgent supplies for premature babies, their mother's milk being donated as well as some who have sadly just experienced still-birth. Blood Bikes transport blood samples, blood products (platelets), heart monitor tapes from people living at home, frozen post-op biopsies, placentas (still-birth research in Birmingham Women's Hospital), bone-marrow, urgent medical notes and medical equipment if capable of carriage on the bikes. Faecal matter is a recent addition - Clostridium difficile can be a fatal infection of the human gut against which antibiotics can be ineffective. Faecal matter can be used to extract gut

bacteria which is screened, pelleted and the pellets ingested/administered to promote the growth of 'good' gut bacteria, helping to avoid death. Covid-19 samples are being taken from outlying locations to Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. Long-distance trips are made occasionally using a relay system, occasionally using volunteer pilots also.



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Roles: a) Controllers: working from home take incoming phone calls, allocate riders, monitor their trips (with blue-tooth contact or by text) and ensure that they return safely. They are trained 1:1, have three months mentoring and have 24-hour support b) Riders: these have to be qualified to a high level to the Institute of Advanced Motorcyclists, RoSPA, police or armed services standard. Each person is assessed intensely every three years. Induction training teaches procedures and tests knowledge of best routes, hospital site location details etc. c) Fundraisers: raising money through public bucket-collection although this has had to stop under the Covid-19 restrictions and d) Speakers, of which Pam is one.

Bikes: There are 17 charity bikes housed at fire- and ambulance stations for instance. They last for 4 years and travel 60,000 miles each on average over that time, costing £15,000 each. Annual repairs, fuel and insurance in 2019 was approximately £44,000. Riders are not permitted to exceed the speed limits. In 2019 almost 250,000 miles were travelled by the bikes. Riders can reclaim fuel costs but they do not do that. The three county Lords Lieutenant are the sponsors of the service and arranged a SSC volunteers get-together at the Raven near Whitchurch.

Following a series of questions from Probus members, Pam told us that SSC has very high standards of riders than many other Blood Bike groups, the longest journey so far had been to Dumfries, there are 250 riders on the books, the logistical challenges rarely meant that they could not 'deliver a job', there is no weight limit for goods carried but a volume limit, transplant organs cannot be carried as they invariably have bulky mechanical support attachments.

Donations: there is a 'Just-giving' page for SSC and their website has a 'virtual bucket'. Annual donations can be made by Direct Debit linking to Gift Aid.

Prees Medical Practice *by Fred Williams*

Like me you may well be visiting the Prees Medical Practice for your Covid vaccination. This is one of the Churchmere group of practices. I remembered reading something about this relatively new centre some time ago so I decided to do a little research. An interesting and heart-warming story was revealed, no doubt some of you will know the tale.

There had been a surgery in Prees for a hundred years run from the doctor's house. The last incumbent was due to retire and would of course have to leave the house, and his surgery now inadequate by modern standards would be lost. This is where Mr Ray Grocott stepped in.

Ray Grocott is the man behind Grocontinental, a business which began in the 1940s as a cattle haulage business and has grown to become an international haulage and food storage company with huge premises on the outskirts of Whitchurch.

Alarmed by the loss of local healthcare, Ray decided that a modern spacious medical centre was what the community of Prees needed, so the Grocott Family Charitable trust was set up and a million pounds of Ray's own money was earmarked for a new centre. Land had to be found and purchased, but what form would the new building take? The proposed building and other facilities such as adequate parking was modelled on Shawbury's then new medical centre.

Building began in 2013 and the new practice was opened in 2015 and known as The Grocott Medical Centre of which Prees is justly proud, and the well respected retired Dr. Guy Carter got to stay in his house. So there you have it in a nutshell, something to think about as that magical needle is pushed into our arms. Thank you Ray Grocott.

Fred Williams

My thanks to the Shropshire Star.

My not so early years of motoring: Part 6 *by Brian Rodgers*

After leaving East Africa I went to the Kingdom of Libya, where I started work in the capital, Tripoli, in early 1964. My first company vehicle there was a Morris Minor Traveller (Woody) followed by a VW Beetle and then a VW 1500 Saloon. I covered long distances in those cars and with the Woody I managed the 600 miles from Benghazi to Tripoli in 12 hours. That was not bad going because sections of the road were then only 3 metres wide and still bore scars from WW II.

After several months I found that a car of my own would be worth while and I bought a Peugeot 403. These were not particularly fast vehicles but were very rugged and had had an excellent reputation in East African rallying. That 403 served me very well for over two years and I used it over all sorts of terrain. By dropping the tyre pressures to 12 psi I was able to drive it through very sandy areas of the pre-desert where normally only Land Rovers went.

During the reign of the Italian fascist government in the 1930s, several Grand Prix had been run on the Mellaha Circuit, a few miles east of Tripoli. Those had been extremely exciting, very fast races and had been contested by Alfa Romeo, Auto Union, Maserati and Mercedes Benz. However, when I reached Tripoli, all that was left of the old circuit were two 90° slightly banked curves, joined by a ½ mile straight. I had thought that, with the foregoing motoring activity, there would still be plenty of interest in motor sport but I was very disappointed to find that there was virtually nothing, other than some family rallies organised by social clubs. However, there were moves afoot to start more serious rallying and the organisers proposed starting in 1965 with a smaller daylight rally followed by a 24 hour event that would go deep down into the pre desert and would include mountain sections. Together with many others, I told the organising committee that I would be more than interested to take part.

Somehow word reached the manager of the Peugeot importer and distributor that I was interested to compete in my 403 and he contacted me to ask whether his organisation could assist. Seizing the bull by the horns, I enquired whether he had thought of putting in a team of Peugeots, using some of his used cars stock. We talked over this possibility for some time and he agreed to discuss the matter with the company owner. A few days later I called in at the dealership to be told that the owner had agreed to putting in a team of three used 404s, of which I would have one. We chose what appeared to be the best of the stock and our preparation was confined to thorough checking out and servicing of the cars. In that first year, although a very good, quite difficult route had been selected for the big event, there were many organisational problems, mainly with time keeping, and numerous official clocks had not been synchronised. At the end of the event there were many very hot words from several not very happy competitors, myself included!

For the following year there were several necessary changes to the organising committee and there were proper timekeeping arrangements for the different events. Also, in the interests of safety in the longer events, crews had to be 3 man, comprising driver, co-driver and navigator. The first event that year was a 12 hour night rally, using map co-ordinates instead of tulips. The event was going well until a British Army vehicle was driven by mistake into a local village, very much to the annoyance of the inhabitants. The army crew were unable to communicate with the villagers and were attacked by some hot heads armed with rocks. One crew member suffered quite bad head injuries before the driver was able to extract the car from the village. Another member managed to call on his army radio to report the incident and the event was cancelled immediately. That incident served as a warning for future events about the importance of not disturbing local communities.

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The 24 hour rally duly took place a short time later. It was now called international, although there were no entries from outside the country. Nonetheless, local competition was becoming very strong as the different importers viewed the event as being of commercial importance, and there were good entries from Datsun, Peugeot, Toyota and VW. Capacity classes now included up to and over 1600 cc and for the event I chose a 1500cc Peugeot 403, while the other two crews opted for larger 404s

Again preparation was confined to thorough checking and servicing although we did fit powerful driving lamps and map reading lights (instead of torches) for the navigators.

The rally started at nightfall and, after a transport section on blacktop roads, the route wound inland over dirt tracks. We were doing well, following another vehicle in heavy dust, when it suddenly jinked left. Too late to take evasive action, I hit the large rock which the other had avoided. I felt a heavy bang underneath and we stopped to investigate. The engine breather, a rigid pipe from the rocker cover and attached to the side of the sump, had gone and had taken several square inches of the side of the alloy sump with it. You might ask what we did then? We flattened out a bully beef can, cut some gasket material and with six self tapping screws we made a leak proof repair to the side of the sump and we were off after only 30 or 40 minutes. Unfortunately, one of us had forgotten to properly secure the bonnet and, when doing about 60 mph, I had the bonnet come up and hit the front of the roof with an almighty clang. I managed to come to a standstill without a problem and we all jumped out, cursing one another, straightened the bonnet and closed it securely.

Then back on to the route. The remainder of the night passed without incident and we were able to make up time before the different controls. However, just after dawn, we were going down into a wadi crossing when a rock cut the sidewall of one of the Pirelli Cinturatos. In our hurry to change the wheel we did not use a spreader board beneath the jack and it slid out when we took the punctured wheel off. We were all rugby players and reasonably strong, but we had to empty the contents of the boot before we could lift the car to reposition the jack. That lost us several minutes.

The morning session was over tracks in very sandy areas and we needed to make up lost time. In trying to do so I managed to overdo one bend and ran into the cemented sand bank alongside. The offside headlamp was gone and there was also some damage to the bodywork.. The crew banished me from driving then and our co-driver took over. All went well until late in the afternoon, when we were travelling across a sandy plain, with the co-driver driving. An old unused stone track ran at right angles to our route. The edge of the track was marked by large rocks and we hit one of those with the front of the chassis, with the bottom of the steering column taking most of the impact. After we had stopped we disconnected the horn to stop it from blowing, and then we examined everything closely. The column had been pushed back and the steering had become very heavy and gear changing with the column shift was very difficult. However, the car was still driveable and we carried on.

I drove the remaining three hours very carefully and limped into the finish. Did we win? No! A British crewed Toyota was first and had also taken the under 1600cc award. However, one of our 404s was 2nd and took the over 1600cc prize. We were 3rd and the other 404 was 5th, and between us we had taken the team prize. The owner of the company was there at the finish and I went over to him directly to apologise for the state of the car, but all he said was "No worry at all, Brian, you have all done very well and we have the team prize" I have no idea of how many more Peugeots he sold as a result of that, but I assume that it was a good number. However, more than the publicity, he had won considerable face among other members of the local automobile community. The event had been sponsored by the local subsidiary of Agip and, to this day, three of us team members still have our Agip engraved tray trophies from the event.

Having had such good results, I should have stayed with Peugeot for the following years but another make arrived on the scene and my crew and I changed to that make. Most of us learn from our mistakes and we certainly did.

The Series of Memories of Ellesmere Residents Extracts from book 5 of the “Memories” Booklets Published in early 2000 by the Ellesmere Society

Memory 29

Tim's Garage Remembered by John Tim's

The garage opened just before the war; the 1914 war that is!

My paternal grandfather started the business, probably to give his three sons an opportunity to enter another field of business beside the family grocer's shop, later replaced by the Coop. The triumvirate was; my father Bert; Bill and Sid. As it turned out, it was a fairly well balanced group. Bill, the eldest, favoured administration. Bert had a practical bent and became the engineer. Sid, the youngest, had an interest in things electrical, not only in respect of vehicles, but also in house wiring. In those days spare parts were not freely available so the garage had two lathes, a heavy duty vertical drilling machine, a metal bending unit for forming body panels, and a large horizontal air compressor feeding into a vertical tank. This, I believe exploded one day and flew upwards like a rocket, leaving a large dent in the corrugated iron roof. All of this machinery was a necessity, as many replacement engine and body parts would have to be made on the spot. I well remember my father replacing worn 'big end' bearings with a soft, solder like metal which then had to be band reamed to fit the crankshaft. They seemed to last as well as the originals. Any heavy shaping and bending for example, of bent axles, would be done next door to the garage, by Dave Evans the blacksmith.

In the early days, car headlights were large acetylene lamps; acetylene being a gas generated in a container by adding calcium carbide to water. The resultant gas was then fed to each headlamp by pipes, producing a fairly bright flame. To improve a vehicle's lighting, electric lamps could be fitted in place of the acetylene variety. These required batteries, and some of these would have been manufactured in the 'battery room', a long, narrow, wooden-walled place. This room also housed a recharging unit to deal with vehicle batteries, and also low voltage radio batteries, small six - volt accumulators of about the same size and weight as a bag of sugar. These had to be recharged about once a week for the princely sum of three or six pence. The windows of this room looked out onto the 'wash', an open area leading out through a double gate, to Cross Street. As its name suggests, this area was used to hose down and clean cars before they were polished. The far wall of the room was that of the fire station which housed the horse-drawn fire pump. I am led to believe that the horse, which the 'engine', led a fairly carefree life on the meadow, an area behind the old United Dairies building. When the fire bell rang, I heard tell, the horse retreated to the farthest corner of the field, making itself as difficult as possible to catch. The garage's Fiat breakdown truck: was soon to become a more reliable, and certainly a more convenient towing unit. A new wing was later added to the existing building, with brick based wooden walls. The wood was obtained from crates, used initially, to transport aircraft spares from the U.S.A during the 1914/18 War. A large paking area was also acquired. This enabled ten lock-up garages to be built at right angles to the new building. Mention must be made of the pits, there being no hydraulic lifts in those days. One was in the centre of the original building. and the other was at the far end of the-new construction. These would now give a health and safety official apoplexy! At about two metres long, a metre wide, and one and a half metres deep, they once had white-washed walls, but these became later, oil-blackened, and the floor was somewhere under a layer of water and oily sludge. When they were not in use they were covered by thick wooden planks.

A small office lay to the right and just inside the main building. Here lay the old cash register, brought, I believe, from the family grocery shop to the garage when opened Dating from 1903, and having been repaired in 1927, it served right up until the garage was sold, when the cash register was bought by Joe Butler for use in his cycle shop.

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That machine is still in use at 'Butler's', having been re-figured to accept decimal coinage. I would not be at all surprised to see it converted again to handle Euros. After all, it's only ninety- eight years old. An agency to sell Ruston Hornsby cars was acquired soon after the 1st World War. The price of these motors was in the region of £675 to £725, then a small fortune. The garage also had one or two trucks used for haulage and a charabanc christened 'The Lily of the Lakes'. This was either for private hire or, like today's bus trips, for running excursions to Llangollen, Rhyl etc.

My own memories of the garage began just before the 2nd World War. Nobody had such a marvellous and magical playground. Apart from all the cars and machinery, an open space between two of the buildings was, to me, a veritable treasure trove. It was, in fact, the scrap yard. One marvel was a massive, solid state-backed switchboard, probably once used to control the electrical power for the lathes and other machines.

Glass tanks and glass rods from the earlier days of Battery manufacture, and a myriad of other treasures were there. Then came the war. This was to bring great changes to the old firm. One brother, Sid, left to join the Army. Of the remaining two brothers, Bill had already served in the army. Bert as now too old, but feeling that he had to do something to help the war effort, he became an inspector in the Air Inspection Directorate, working at the Standard engine Works in Coventry. As a family, we dutifully followed bad move! Having been bombed out of our home in Coventry, we returned, somewhat dishevelled, to Ellesmere. Petrol rationing, fewer cars on the road, and half of the garage taken over by the R.E.M.E. a Buffer depot, certainly did not help trade. Around this time, one of the lock garages, Number 7, I think, became the grain store for a pig club. The swill was boiled up for use near to the pig- sties next to the carpenter's shop in Dave Evans' yard. The animals were slaughtered at the top end of the Railway Inn yard and for many weeks afterwards we ate well and often.

Each year Wings Week came around, and the sales window was given over to a display of RAF equipment. War-like things, such as parachutes, dinghies, 20 mm cannon, and on one occasion, a bomber's front turret complete with four machine guns, the odd bomb or two, and other bits and pieces were exhibited there. A similar event known as 'Warships Week' saw a total, in National Savings of £110,010.10s.3d for the week February 14th -21st 1942.

It was during one of these weeks that I remember seeing 'The Prime Minister of Mirth' George Robey, complete with bowler hat and large eyebrows, helping to drum up enthusiasm and cash by entertaining a crowd of people outside the Town Hall. It would be around this time that I used to spend school holidays helping to serve petrol, oil etc. One vehicle sticks in my mind. It was a large, shiny, black Packard. The driver wore a strange military uniform, and asked for petrol in a strong Cockney accent.

"Whose car is it?" I asked.

He replied. "The General's".

I later found out that he meant General de Gaulle. Other notables included Sir John Barbirolli. I drove his car 'on tow' after it had been in rather close contact with Ellesmere College gates. Mike Hawthorn, the racing driver, filled up his Jaguar with over forty gallons of petrol (180+ litres), and one person who was never seen for, as my father recounted, some years before the war, a large limousine pulled up to fill up. There was nothing strange in that, except for the fact that the car was completely blacked out by heavy curtains. When asked who was in the car, the chauffeur replied with just one word, "Pavlova".

The war had drawn to a close, and as a teenager, the garage no longer had the same fascination for me. In any case, the end of the old firm was in sight. The final curtain came down with the death of Bill. The garage was sold and passed into other hands, finally ending up today as Griffiths.

Now, sometimes, as I walk past the old garage site, I get the feeling that somewhere, way beneath the floor, lies a layer of sludge and the remains of oily, whitewashed walls. Some things never change!

MOTORING MEMOIRS OF CHRIS STRETTON, b1950

I'm Chris Stretton, writing this in January 2021 in my 71st year and making the most of forced time spent indoors thanks to the winter weather and the latest Covid-19 lockdown.

I can't remember a time when I wasn't interested in wheels of any variety. Where did this come from? Are we the product of our genes or environment, nature or nurture? Well I guess I can blame my Dad on both counts as his time in the RAF flying Hurricanes gave him a love of speed and things mechanical which he satisfied with motorbikes, cars and racing for the rest of his life following demobilisation in 1945. His enthusiasm undoubtedly rubbed off on me through shared experiences as I was growing up: in his garage, sitting alongside him in a wide selection of cars and weekends at racing circuits.



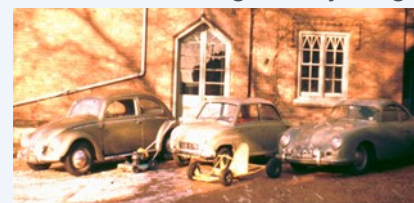
The first of these experiences that I can positively remember happened in 1953. We were living in Muswell Hill in London whilst Dad finished his medical training. One sunny, summer's day I was taken along to spend a day at the Crystal Palace racing circuit, hanging off the chestnut paling fencing just feet away from thundering racing cars. My first initiation into the sounds and smells that would excite me for the rest of my life!



Early in my life I was provided with my own wheels, initially a small tricycle, that was passed on to my sister once I could balance on two wheels. Finally it did service with my brother and looks well worn in the picture of the three of us taken in December 1957. My bicycle had good use and I remember the need to make it sound like a motorbike by inserting some folded cardboard through the brakes so it made a sort-of-convincing-for-a-young-boy-engine-noise against the spokes.



Dad seemed to change cars fairly often and interesting wheels would come and go in his garage. I recall a Riley, Alvis, Standard 8, Goggomobil, VWs: Beetle, Kharman Ghia and Variant, Healey Silverstone, GN, Frazer Nashes: Chaindrive and Postwar and Porsches: 356s and 911s.



This picture is taken outside The Orchard in about 1960 showing the then current equipt: A VW Beetle, Goggomobil and his Pre-A 356 Porsche. If you look carefully you will also see a go-kart. More about that later....

So, I was already starting to have an interest in cars, what young boy doesn't? An early vivid memory, even today, was the first occasion when I was sitting alongside Dad in one of his cars when he 'showed me what it's got'. 100 mph came up on the speedo, much to my excitement!. This was in the Healey Silverstone that he bought in 1956 and looked fast just standing in the drive.



I went away to boarding school at the age of eight, where my best friend was David, whose parents owned a farm near Wellington. I used to spend time staying at David's farm in the holidays where we had some great times! David's parents had given him an old Ford Popular so I soon learnt to drive in this, chasing rabbits in the headlights, and fixing it when it went wrong.

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Each summer we would enjoy summer holidays at Moelyberth caravan site at Llangwnadl, on which we had a permanent caravan that Dad had refurbished and towed up there behind his vintage Alvis in 1954. Most of the time was spent on Penllech beach, sometimes getting there in my uncle's old Land Rover to which I clearly took a liking!



As if my father was not a big enough influence, my uncle provided my first serious petrol-based experience. He had a business in Bewdley, making materials handling equipment and trailers. He was also a petrolhead and, in the early 1960s, was one of the first people to start making and racing go-karts.

As part of the development process testing was required and this took place on the old runway of RAF Atcham, then owned by a local farmer and, coincidentally, the airfield where Dad had been posted when he returned from South Africa in December 1945. I was only 11 or 12 at this time and allowed to blast up and down the runway and race around the circuit that we laid out with cones.

Word got out about this venue and it soon became popular with local karters until the farmer closed it down following a horrendous accident when someone hurtled up the runway but failed to stop at the end, being decapitated on the wire fence. Thankfully I was not there at the time.



Dad was a great enthusiast of both Frazer Nashes and Porsches. In September 1961 he was one of thirty 356 owners who attended the founding meeting of the Porsche Club Great Britain at Chateau Impney, coming away with the job of designing the newly-established club's logo that remains essentially the same today. He was enrolled as an Honorary Member in 1970.



Dad bought the GN Martyr, a Shelsley Special, in 1964 and I learned much as I watched him at work in the garage and was thrilled at weekends when we visited VSCC events at Oulton Park, Silverstone, Shelsley Walsh, Prescott and Loton Park. Burned Castrol R provided the accompanying aroma that would forever bring back memories.

The Big Time arrived on 29th June 1966 when I reached the age of 16 and was allowed on the roads on a motorbike. My provisional licence was arranged in advance but I needed some wheels and Dad arranged to borrow a 122cc Villiers engined Tandon from a friend.

On the road on my birthday I now had regular expenses and had been given a monthly allowance by my parents. Petrol wasn't too bad, at 4s/10d a gallon (24p), but I also had to buy clothing from this. It seemed to be that I only fell off my bike when I was wearing new trousers, putting holes in the knees and pressure on my allowance!

My next watershed event was the driving test in Wellington. This was a fairly relaxed experience with the clipboard-carrying Examiner walking around a route in the town's suburbs, getting me to stop occasionally to ask questions, give me instructions and watching my performance. The biggest moment was the emergency stop. I was instructed to keep riding around the route and, when he jumped off the pavement waving his clipboard after a few circuits, I had to execute an emergency stop. A few circuits later this idiot jumped off the pavement in front of me so, to avoid him, I rode smoothly around him before realising what I should have done, pulling up at the kerbside further beyond the Examiner. *"Let's try that again shall we Mr Stretton!"* Good job he had a sense of humour. I passed.

More next week

This is a fascinating story of not so long ago which I read while researching items for this newsletter

Shropshire Poachers..

Eustace Rogers on POACHING

Interviewed in 1975 by Graham Woodruff of Telford Community Arts

"Ironbridge was notorious for poachers. Real poachers! Being nothing else whatsoever. Only poaching. And in and out of jail all the while. Never altering their way of life."

"Now – the main way of poaching was by nets at night. But the poacher, he'd got the policeman breathing down his neck, the gamekeepers, the farmers, anybody, and he'd got to outwit the lot of them like. Well, now, he was perhaps safer when he was 'getting' – doing his poaching. His hardest job was getting the stuff home, because the policemen knew the poacher well and they would be waiting for him to come."

"The way they used to get the stuff home was chiefly by coracle. See, the coracle is the small boat that a man puts on his back and away he goes. He goes up the river and lets the water bring him back, bringing his cargo as well."

"There would be perhaps six of these men going out at night, six of this gang. Now they couldn't go in a gang, making it too obvious. So they would start off in the afternoon. One man would walk up with a coracle on his back, which was thought nothing of because it was common. Then he'd leave this coracle perhaps at Cressage, which is five mile upstream and then he would make for the meeting place. Then a couple would go that way, a couple this way, making all for the same spot. They knew exactly where they were going to meet in the hours of darkness, perhaps ten o'clock at night. This is winter time, see. And they would meet, as I say, at ten o'clock in some wood because they knew the country like the back of their hand, better.

They would do their netting. Then, they'd come back with their haul to the coracle – perhaps fifty or sixty or eighty rabbits – and load it on the coracle and me grandfather would bring the stuff back, with all their nets as well."

"Now, these other – I said six – these other five men would walk home as if they'd been out for the good of their health. The policemen would meet them, of course, he'd have them because they weren't trying to avoid him - they'd got nothing!"

"See, my grandfather would land here (he points to the river) and he'd only got to get up the bank and into the house. Right. But the police knew the drift. There's no doubt about that. They knew the drift. So sometimes they would be waiting here. So the poachers would shout 'Keep on going, Tommy!'. And away me granddad would go - down to Jackfield where Fursley lived down there and Bunkers lived down there, see, and land them at their place."

"And the biggest penalty for poaching I've heard of has been seven years."

FROM THE TELFORD COMMUNITY ARTS ARCHIVES

In Tommy's day rabbit poaching was prosecuted as a crime.

By the time Harry was catching rabbits he had the permission of the landowners, to prevent damage to crops and keep rabbit numbers down as well as providing a free harvest of healthy meat.

In the 1939 census Harry declared his occupation as 'rabbit catcher' !

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Eusty tells another story of Tommy and his cohort, passed down to Ken Jones:



They couldn't have done this without the coracle and the river see, and they'd be poaching ten or twelve miles up-river and they'd always have a coracle. Buildwas was a favourite place to leave a coracle in what they call the 'Bogey Hole' and nobody would interfere with them in those days and the beauty of it was they'd come down river; in the dark of course and then they'd only got to carry their catch from the river bank to the cottage where we are now.

Now the poachers' wives they would come the next day and carry away eight or nine rabbits tied on a cord around their waist under their long dresses and away they'd go. Then they'd get them to old Langford up the street, the local barber and not many yards from the shop was the police station. The men would go into the shop as if they wanted a hair-cut or a shave, but they didn't they wanted a rabbit. They'd sit down in the chair and he'd throw this big cloth around em, they wun prepared for it with big deep pocket in their jacket,

old Langford would put a rabbit in and out they'd come. Anyhow the police nailed him for aiding and abetting the poachers. He had six months for it and he put a notice in the window 'Closed for stocktaking' and all he'd got they said was a pair of scissors and a comb!!

Eusty shared a vivid memory of Long Netting, with Ken Jones:

'The first time I went with my father was on to the Buildwas Park estate. I'd be eleven years then, that would be 1925. Now then our nets were 100 yards long and they'd be nearly a yard high when they were pegged out. With a hundred yard net you'd have about thirteen pegs in that, now me father taught me how to run it out, and I'd never been on the field before, he said 'Keep so far from the hedge' he set me off about four or five yards from the hedge and told me to keep the net tight, and he'd come behind me putting these pegs in. Now another net the same, and he said 'Go back along and follow the nets' because it was pitch dark and he told me to squat down between the two nets, with me hand on each net and he told me that I'd feel the rabbits coming into the nets. It was pitch dark and I can tell thee I was scared. But me father told me 'if anybody comes shout and I'll be with thee', and I knew he would.

Well you've heard a sheep cough at night, well it's just like a man coughing. I tell thee I was scared but he told me never to leave them nets. See what played the most vital part was the wind, now you'd have got to have the wind blowing from the rabbit to you. Me father would come out of the house at night and look up and say 'It's right for the Primrose Meadow tonight', and he was talking about miles from here beyond Buildwas, see it must be blowing from the rabbit to you, otherwise if there was a million on the field you wouldn't catch one rabbit'.

The Ironbridge Coracle Trust. The Ironbridge Coracle Trust.

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)

