



Probus Club Ellesmere



Covid-19 Lockdown 2021 Newsletter

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Speaker's Corner

At our next Probus Zoom meeting on Thursday 15th April at 10.30am will be Rev'd Pat Hawkins speaking to us about 'Her life'

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.

Probus Club Zoom meeting 01/04/21

'Hearing dogs for the Deaf'

Jeremy welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced John McGinn and he gave us a very interesting and informative talk on Hearing dogs for the Deaf which is a national charity. Covid-19 pandemic has affected the dog training and allocation of them to recipients. John took his volunteer role as a Hearing dog trainer when he retired.

John said is well recognised that appropriate dogs can help relieve loneliness, insecurity and provide support for people with sight and hearing challenges as well as the general isolated population. The Guide Dogs charity was found in 1934, Hearing Dogs for the Deaf in 1982.

There is no government funding for the latter, it costs about £25,000 to have a dog trained and £45,000 during the course of its life. There are approximately 1,000 of these dogs in the UK and 15 volunteers for each 'paid post', trainers are trained at Sandbach being the most local to us here. 'Hearing dogs' (Hd) trainers are assessed for appropriateness of their home and garden security. John's current dog is Jimmy, a miniature poodle, the second most intelligent breed after the border collie. Other breeds used are cocker spaniels, labradors and cockerpoos. The charity has its own breeding programme since the value of the dogs has risen dramatically in recent years. Once a puppy is allocated to a trainer the first few weeks are spent 'bonding', playing and starting basic commands. They are trained initially with home crates which provide a comfortable, safe and secure area for them.

Training has four stages and can take from 12 to 16/18 months:

1-star: The trainer is allocated a puppy which gets used to different surfaces to walk on and new sounds (hoover etc) in their own home.

2-star: The start of teaching the dog basic commands such as 'wait, sit, stand' and 'give paw' which is needed for vet checks and cleaning feet, learning to play nicely, not mouthe or bite and to settle on command as needed when in shops for instance. Also getting used to meeting other dogs, allowing a brief 'hello', calling them back and walking on. Meeting and learning to deal with children.

3-star: 'Impulse control'. Reward good behaviour and ignore bad behaviour. Use of small treats to teach walking to heel and off-lead training using claps, whistle and the puppy's name for instance.

Teaching 'wait', 'off you go' and calling back even if there is a squirrel or cat about!

4-star: High-level training for specifics such as doorbell, cooker-timer, alarm clocks, fire and smoke alarms. The training is intense and the dogs love it. In the case of smoke and fire alarms the dog is taught to nudge and then lie flat on the ground, indicating 'get out of the house'.

Up until recent years the dogs were trained to put their paws onto the legs of the person to attract attention but that could scratch. They are since taught to 'nudge' gently but assertively, initially with a treat behind an open hand then moving on to green taps on a plastic cap, then green tape on the trainer's leg then tape-less, being rewarded on each successful occasion. A 'squeaker' is also used to learn to nudge. With sleeping deaf children the dogs are trained to pull the bedclothes off the bed in a 'tug-of-war' if necessary!

Only one in five Guide Dogs get through that training. With Hearing dogs, an appropriate home is found for all of those put through the training, either as 'fully fledged' Hearing Dogs, 'sound support dogs' (ie just for in-home sounds response work, not out shopping for instance) or 'confidence and companion dogs' (particularly for children and the elderly, especially those living on their own).

John introduced us to the dog he is training Jimmy on the Zoom call in his kitchen and illustrated a number of the taught commands (and rewards). There were many mixed and interesting questions from our members after John's presentation today and we confirmed that Ellesmere Probus would be making a monetary donation to Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. We thanked John in our normal way with a round of applause.

Anyone who would like to make a personal donation or simply spread the word of the good work done by this charity can find out more at their website: <https://www.hearingdogs.org.uk>

View from the Crow's Nest

Dear Probus Friends,

Is it really a fortnight since our last Newsletter? It only feels like a couple of days despite the recent mixture of clear blue skies followed by snow, hail and ice, from short sleeved shirt to winter woolies in 24 hours! Nevertheless the displays of daffodils, primroses and blossoms for example make this time of year full of hope for longer, warmer days to come. Lots of our members have had their second 'jabs' which is a good step forward to being able to feel more confident about life. Coronavirus has been more effective than Offa's Dyke in keeping the Welsh border closed, the sooner those of us that wish to can get back to walking, golfing, fishing or just generally enjoying that glorious countryside the better.



Sometimes you just have to go with

The doom-watchers are now talking about the danger of clots linked to vaccination. Many others think that the 'anti-vaxxers' are the real 'clots' in that debate.

We have nearly finished populating our Probus speaker programme for 2021 and will let you have the latest updated list very soon. We hope that you will enjoy the interesting range of topics. If you are able to join us on Zoom and need some help discovering how to do that do let us know. The more the merrier!

No decisions can yet be made about when we can resume meeting at the Comrades Club but we will keep you informed.

Our Committee are meeting next week and we would very much welcome any nominations for new Committee members to help ensure that we keep 'vibrant' and fresh-thinking into the future.

Our thanks as ever to those who are managing to keep valuable contact across our Ellesmere Probus membership and our sincere thoughts to those having to deal with difficult health issues in any way.

April 2021 brings the hand-over of our Probus Presidency from me to Bill Ferries and many thanks again to Bill for taking over the baton. It has been a real pleasure and privilege to be your President for the past 18 months and I look forward to continue contributing my bit to the smooth running of our Club.

With very best wishes and thanks for your support, Jeremy

Terrible Jokes courtesy of Oswestry U3a

1. Dad, are we pyromaniacs? Yes, we arson.
2. What do you call a pig with laryngitis? Disgruntled.
3. Writing my name in cursive is my signature move.
4. Why do bees stay in their hives during winter? Swarm.
5. If you're bad at haggling, you'll end up paying the price.
6. Just so everyone's clear, I'm going to put my glasses on.
7. A commander walks into a bar and orders everyone around.
8. I lost my job as a stage designer. I left without making a scene.
9. Never buy flowers from a monk. Only you can prevent florist friars.
10. How much did the pirate pay to get his ears pierced? A buccaneer.
11. I once worked at a cheap pizza shop to get by. I kneaded the dough.
12. My friends and I have named our band 'Duvet'. It's a cover band.
13. I lost my girlfriend's audiobook, and now I'll never hear the end of it.
14. Why is 'dark' spelled with a k and not c? Because you can't see in the dark.
15. Why is it unwise to share your secrets with a clock? Well, time will tell.
16. When I told my contractor I didn't want carpeted steps, they gave me a blank stare.
17. Bono and The Edge walk into a Dublin bar and the bartender says, "Oh no, not U2 again."
18. Prison is just one word to you, but for some people, it's a whole sentence.
19. Scientists got together to study the effects of alcohol on a person's walk, and the result was staggering.
20. I'm trying to organize a hide and seek tournament, but good players are really hard to find.
21. I got over my addiction to chocolate, marshmallows, and nuts. I won't lie, it was a rocky road.
22. What do you say to comfort a friend who's struggling with grammar? There, their, they're.
23. I went to the toy store and asked the assistant where the Schwarzenegger dolls are & he replied, "Aisle B, back."
24. What did the surgeon say to the patient who insisted on closing up their own incision? Suture self.
25. I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin awareness.

We saw the Sea *By Peter Sanderson*

I spent the first 17 yrs. of my working life within the fleet of Shell Tankers (UK) Ltd., which was better known in worldwide, politically incorrect shipping circles as the Anglo-Geordie Paraffin Oil Company. Under the auspices of Shell Tankers, I rose from being a lowly Engineer Apprentice to the dizzy heights of Chief Engineer on steam and motor (diesel) ships.

Tonnage

The tonnage usually referred to is the Deadweight Tonnage, this is the actual weight of cargo, fuel (bunkers), stores and water that trims the vessel to her Plimsoll mark and gives an approximation of the carrying capacity of the ships. The actual all-up weight is the Displacement Tonnage and is a higher figure; typically for a 225,000 tonner, the Displacement would be 250,000 tons, giving a hull weight of 25,000 tons.

A bit of historical background

In the 1840's, a Londoner, Marcus Samuel, was a trader importing goods and commodities from the Middle and Far East, ranging from rice to exotic shells, these shells being very popular curios in Victorian Britain, often being used to make trinket boxes and other ornaments. The business prospered and in due course, in 1878, two of his sons, Marcus Jun. and Samuel took over, extending the business and setting up subsidiaries in the Far East, especially in Japan where, amongst all the other commodities they began dealing in kerosene which was used as lamp, or lighting, oil.

In the 1880's, the United States supplied 78% of the world's kerosene trade and Russia the remaining 22%, the major players being J.D.Rockefeller's Standard Oil of Ohio(ESSO.) with the Russian fields being largely under the competitive control of the Parisian Rothschilds and Robert and Ludwig Nobel, brothers of Alfred Nobel, who invented dynamite. Rockefeller's business ethic was to crush competition in any way he could

These four operators realised that to compete with Rockefeller, it was vital to their success that the full control and operation of an integrated supply and transport system, from well head to customer, and that bulk shipping, in purpose built tankers, rather than hitherto in barrels in cargo ships, was key to this. The Nobel's had built such a ship, the small S.S."Zoroaster" to move oil from around the Caspian Sea fields to the refinery at Baku, for rail shipment to Batum on the Black Sea. In 1885, Standards' German subsidiary ordered the world's first purpose-built ocean going tanker, the 3,000 ton S.S."Gluckauf" from a British yard, to be followed in next 6 yrs. by some 80 more ships. Crucially, the Suez Canal Authority considered these ships too dangerous to take passage through the Canal.

The Rothschilds came to a confidential agreement with Marcus Samuel for him to export their Caucasian kerosene from Batum to the Far East, for sale there in direct competition with Standard.

As secretly as possible, to avoid destruction by Standard, Marcus set up suitable depots, tank storage and distribution networks throughout the Far East. It was also realised that for these shipments of kerosene to be profitable, they had to go through the Suez Canal rather round the Cape.

In order to overcome the Suez Canal Authority's ban on tankers, Marcus Samuel's organisation agreed to design and build tankers to the Authority's requirements, and the first of a 14- ship order, built under a cloak of secrecy, the 5,000 ton S.S. "Murex" was launched in May 1892 at William Grey's yard in West Hartlepool and took her first cargo through the Suez Canal in August of that year, thus inaugurating the Shell tanker fleet. "Murex" was the Latin name of a particular shell and, ever since, all company ships have been given the Latin name of shells.

Apparently, very little cash was put up to organise the foregoing, the deals being largely financed by extended credit and bills of exchange. As a result of these deals, Samuel Samuel found himself becoming a merchant banker and regularised proceedings by forming a private bank which later became the Hill- Samuel bank.

To finish this potted history, The Samuel brothers traded under various names until 1897 when Shell Transport & Trading was formed with a nondescript mussel shell as a logo; this was replaced by the now-famous "pecten" shell in 1904. Ultimately, the company merged with Royal Dutch Petroleum and is now Royal Dutch Shell.

The Fleets

The main fleets were British, Dutch, French & German; there were also small local autonomous coastal fleets in New Zealand and Venezuela. The first four were chartered by Shell International Marine in London for world-wide trade. The French & German fleets consisted of about 6 ships each while the British and Dutch fleets had about 120-130 ships each. In addition, several hundred ships belonging to other trading companies were on long term charter or spot charter. Thus, the Company had a huge number of ships under its control and used its own fleets to manipulate the market. One charter requirement was that all ships, including ours, were on charter for a minimum period of 350 days per year with the remaining 15 days theoretically available for maintenance, so they were hard worked.

The British Fleet

When I joined, the ships ranged in size from 6000 ton, steam engined, refined product “sand scratchers” to 65,000ton crude carriers, with the majority being 18,000 ton general purpose vessels. Products carried varied from liquid methane at minus 268⁰F to bitumen at about 180⁰F, the majority of cargoes being lub. oils, diesel, gas oil, kerosene, mogas (motor gasoline-petrol, avgas (aviation gasoline) and avtur(aviation turbojet engine kerosene) in the smaller ships and crude oil in the larger ones. The two methane carriers were the world’s first and were classed as 25000 tonners although the cargo only weighed 12,500 tons. I served as a Junior Engineer on the “Methane Progress” which, with its sister ship “Methane Princess” were in Furness Withy colours, but manned by Shell personnel and owned by a consortium of interested parties. Also within the British fleet were three American built, Liberian registered 50,000 ton crude carriers (Classed as T5’s, T= Tanker, 5 = 50,000 tons dwt. a WWII designation) -absolutely magnificent vessels, one of which I was lucky enough to serve in as 2nd Engineer. In addition, run in conjunction with the British Fleet, but entirely separate from it until it was incorporated into Shell Tankers in 1962, was the Eagle Oil Fleet, set up in about 1912 by the British Mexican Eagle Oil Co. which was absorbed by Shell in 1919, hence Shell-Mex. Two ships of historic wartime note in the Eagle Fleet were the “San Demetrio” and the Eagle manned, Texaco owned “Ohio”, the “Texaco” prefix being deleted, probably for some “diplomatic” reason. The first of these was the subject of a wartime film “San Demetrio”, London.”-She was attacked on loaded passage in the Atlantic, set on fire, abandoned, found next day still on fire but afloat. After re-boarding, they managed to put out the fires, got the engines going and sailed her back to Londonderry, by dead reckoning, as the Bridge had been destroyed, and was then escorted to the Clyde with an intact cargo. The “Ohio” was the prime target in the famous blockade running convoy to Malta, ultimately being taken into Valetta lashed between two destroyers to keep her afloat.

The ships were all single screw, the majority being steam turbine powered with boiler pressures of around 500-600 psi and superheat steam temperature of about 800-850⁰F., giving about 300⁰F superheat. The few 12000 tonners were diesel powered but had steam boilers to power cargo pumps and other auxiliaries. Service speeds were 13-14 knots. When I left 17yrs. later, tonnages had moved from between 20,000 to 600,000 tons (twin screw), most ships under 70,000 tons were motor ships while those over this figure were still steam powered with pressures of 1,000psi and temperatures of 1,000⁰F., with 400⁰F superheat. Service speeds were much the same.

In addition to shifting cargo, we were involved with about 12-15% of all the maritime research carried out in the UK., this varying from developing the world’s first gas turbine powered ship,(not the Navy’s “Brave” class MTBs!) the “Auris”, which ran on boiler oil , modifying main diesel engines to run on boiler oil, paint & coating systems, true motion radar, Very Large Crude Carrier handling trials, trialling UHT milk, underwater hull maintenance, psychometric testing of personnel and early trials in real-time data logging to name just a few items!!

Life aboard

A ship’s complement, headed by the Master, or Old Man, consisted of 12 officers, and about 35 crew plus any apprentices and wives. Wives signed on as Supernumerary Writers and were expected to keep their husbands’ accommodation shipshape! Life aboard was regulated by the watch system which was 4 hours on and 8 hours off, starting midnight to 4am, 4am to 8 am, 8am to 12 noon when the cycle repeated itself. Watchkeeping duties involved cargo operations in port, maintaining a routine surveillance of the ship’s safety and course on the bridge and keeping the engineroom equipment running, as near as possible, in accordance with the design parameters. Additional duties, specific to each watch were carried out as required, some of which are mentioned below.

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The 12-4 was taken, on the bridge, by the 2nd Mate and in the engine room by the 3rd Engineer and his Junior Engineer. The 2nd Mate was the ship's navigator and was responsible for setting the courses, subject to the Old Man's scrutiny, and keeping the charts up to date. He also wound the ship's clocks and both chronometers (a chronometer is NOT an accurate clock, but one which has a known, constant inaccuracy which is allowed for in navigation calculations) The 3rd Engineer was the ship's electrician-uniquely, for a deep sea fleet, Shell didn't employ electricians so as engineers, we learned to insulate screwdrivers and keep one hand in your pocket when working on live equipment! He also was responsible for the Starboard boiler

The 4-8 was taken on the bridge by the 1st. Mate or Chief Officer who was also second in command and in charge of cargo operations, tank cleaning, and deck department maintenance. In the engine room the 2nd Engineer and his junior took the watch. The 2nd was in full charge of the engineers and firemen and machinery spaces excluding the pump rooms and planned and implemented all the maintenance and spares requirements in conjunction with the Chief Engineer.

The 8-12 was taken on the bridge by the 3rd Mate who was also the ship's safety and entertainments officer, looking after the firefighting gear, lifeboats and maintaining the ship's inventory of the signal and national flags of the countries the ship may visit (if a flag was not available on board, or had been changed, the required flag was brought on board by the Pilot so that protocol could be maintained on entering port) as well as changing the movies & videos in port!. The 4th Eng. and his junior took the watch in the engineroom and were also responsible for the Port boiler, the freshwater distillation plant and lifeboat engines.

The bridge watchkeepers also had two ABs on watch with them as lookouts; usually they worked hour on hour off to maintain their visual alertness. Steering was by autopilot, but quartermasters took the wheel when entering and leaving port. Fuel consumption rose by a ton or two per day when on hand steering! The master, or "Old Man" was in total command of the ship-his word was law! He didn't normally keep watches but was always on call and took charge at critical times such as entering and leaving port or bad weather conditions. The Chief Engineer reported to the Old Man and was in overall charge of all machinery and electrical maintenance, excluding the radio and radar equipment, ordering spares, keeping maintenance records, dry docking repair lists, ordering and loading fuel oil, etc. Should any watch keeping officer become incapacitated, the Old Man or Chief would take over the 8-12 watch and the others moved to other watches to suit,

In practice, there was no strict adherence to each other's roles as engineers, and you would pitch in to help get the job done as required. Watchkeepers also worked field days, either before or after watches, so a 70-80 hour week was the norm. When in a pilotage or bad weather, standby watches of 6 on/6 off were worked to help with the additional workload.

The Radio Operator was in a unique position at that time as he was employed by Marconi to operate and maintain their short wave radio and radar equipment on board. He kept watches according to Greenwich Mean Time which led to some peculiar hours when in the Far East! By law, the radio was shut down while in harbour limits and contact was made with local shoreside by VHF radio.

With British Crews, the Chief Steward was an officer, but with Chinese crews, he was a petty officer. In either case, they were the ship's bookkeeper and in charge of the all-important Catering Department! It was fascinating to watch the Chinese steward do the accounts on a calculator and then check them on his abacus.

There were 5 petty officers- bosun, deck storekeeper, pumpman, engine room storekeeper and chief cook. The bosun and deck store keeper ran the day working deckhands under orders from the Mate; the pumpman operated and maintained the cargo pumps and deck machinery under orders of the Chief Engineer while the engineroom storekeeper ran the dayworking firemen under orders of the 2nd Eng. The chief cook held sway over the galley along with the second cook/baker and galley boy and agreed the daily menus with the Chief Steward. Additional stewards did the routine housework in the Officers' quarters and served three meals a day in the Officers saloon. The crew had a mess boy to serve them in their messroom.

To be Continued in next issue

My later years of motoring: Part 10 by Brian Rodgers

At the end of The Holy Month I had to go back to the Interior and I went in my superb new Land Rover V8 County. With the power train of the Range Rover in a normal beam axle LWB Land Rover, it was a very stable vehicle and very suitable for the gravel roads of the Interior. All V8 Land Rovers in Oman were supplied with a second fuel tank and with additional tankage, plus a large container, when setting out, I had close to 40 gallons on board; very necessary at 13 mpg. The SU carburettors had weir type float chambers and any overflow fuel ran back from the chambers to the rear tank. With full tanks, if the rear tank was selected first, there were no problems. However, if another tank were selected first, there would be a steady overflow of fuel out through the rear filler cap as fuel was returned to the already full rear tank. The only problem I experienced with the fuel system was when the electric pump stopped pumping; as did happen from time to time. I knew immediately when that happened because the pump, located below the driver's floorboard, would stop ticking. The remedy was simple; get out of the car and crawl underneath. There, remove the plastic cover from the pump, then gently file the CB points and then reassemble. 30 minutes work, although if there was any rain at the time, a change of clothing would be essential!

Of all the 4x4 vehicles that I had during my 20+ years in Oman, that was the finest. The smooth, unhurried V8 engine made long distance journeys a pleasure rather than a chore. It also gave the car speed such as no other Land Rover could achieve and I can remember once seeing a speedometer reading of close to 130 km/h (almost 80 mph) on a main road. Not bad for a 2½ ton vehicle with the aerodynamics of a breeze block. In 28 months I covered 176 000 kilometres in the car and made some epic journeys in it. In between these journeys, I managed to do a little office work as well!

Normally I travelled prepared for most eventualities and I carried 4 spare wheels, 20 litres of bottled water, some foodstuffs, prismatic compass, military maps, unditching gear, two bottle jacks and a basic toolkit. We worked in some very remote areas of the country and, with varying terrain, tyre selection and tyre pressures were most important. I used Michelins always, the type depending on the terrain where I was working, but mostly XS sand tyres. While they were by far the best for desert work, they were not very puncture resistant and also had very little grip on wet asphalt. Late one night I arrived at a very wet main road curve at some speed and, without warning, the back end broke away. I must have travelled a good 50 metres on opposite lock, saying a prayer or two as I went, until the car straightened up.

That car was very much a go anywhere vehicle and, even without a snorkel, it had amazing fording ability. One summer afternoon I arrived at a flooding wadi crossing. All traffic was at a standstill with queues of several hundred metres on either side of the crossing. I could see that the water, although flowing strongly, was not more than about knee deep and, rolling up my trouser legs I waded tentatively out towards the middle. The current was strong but I managed to reach the deepest part without being swept away. Then, back to the vehicle, select differential lock and low ratio 3rd gear and drive into the water, with engine rpm at high idle. With the laden vehicle weighing over 2 tons, there was no tendency to be swept sideways by the current and I crossed without difficulty.

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At the far side I was given a big cheer by the drivers of the stationery vehicles and one local obviously thought that, if a crazy Inglizi could make the crossing, then so could he. In my rear view mirror, I saw him start the crossing in his Toyota Hi Lux 4x2 pickup until, at less than $\frac{1}{4}$ way over, his car was picked up by the current and washed away down stream. He was a very lucky man indeed because only about 300 metres downstream from the crossing there was a thorn tree close to the side of the wadi and the Hi Lux became wedged between the tree and the bank. I saw the driver climb out through the side window and then perch on the roof, where he would have had to spend an hour or two, waiting for the flood waters to subside.

From time to time I became bogged in the very fine sands in the Empty Quarter. The main problem in sand was "Diagonal Unloading", when the diagonally opposite wheels dig in and the wheels at the other end of each axle remain at surface level, unloaded and with no traction. Getting out became an art and I used the two bottle jacks alternately on lengths of timber to jack the wheels up to level. Then filling in the wheel ruts with shovels full of sand, I was able to drive out, using the highest gear and lowest rpm possible, and I could be back on my route after only about 30 minutes.

I suffered only two breakdowns in the car, the first when the coil stopped producing sparks. That happened on a desert track late one summer day when the shade temp was probably in the 40°s, although where one finds shade in the desert I have never ascertained. We had been heading for an oil rig, which I estimated to be about 30 km away. My colleague and I waited until just before dark and then started walking. Imagine our relief to walk over the first hump in the road and to see that the rig had moved and was only about 2 km ahead. The rig mechanic came out with me and brought a spare coil with him and within a few minutes we were mobile.

The second breakdown was much more serious. Very late on a winter afternoon I was heading for one of our bigger camps in the Interior. The main road was very rough and every time I passed over a large bump I could hear a groaning sound from the front of the car. I stopped once to check but could find nothing wrong. As darkness fell I reached our access road and thought, "Only 25 km to go and then a couple of beers with Tom, our foreman, and then, an early bed". That did not happen because, after only a few kilometres, there was one large groan and the front of the car nosed down. The front axle casing had broken just inboard of the steering joint. After examining the axle I thought I might try to reverse the car to our camp but the reversing lamp gave as much light as a guttering candle and I gave up any idea of going further. I remembered then that I had asked our radio operator in Head Office to give my ETA to Tom on the evening radio call and I assumed that Tom would come out to look for me. No such luck: As I learned later, with the bad weather, atmospherics had prevented any radio transmission that afternoon.

By 8.00 pm I realised that no-one was coming and I made a "hot supper". By wiring two cans of Mulligatawny Soup to one of the exhaust manifolds, I soon had good warm soup, supped with cream crackers, and washed down with a can of beer. Then the wait. That must have been one of the coldest nights that I ever spent, partly because Middle East Land Rovers had no heaters. Also, exposed to the bitterly cold desert winds, the body of the Land Rover was soon like the inside of a deep freeze.

Even with several layers of clothing and a blanket on top I froze. After midnight, sleep was impossible and I could only sit there twiddling my thumbs until about 4.00 am. Then, knowing that I was only about 5 hours walk from camp, I set off with my survival kit of blanket, golf umbrella for sun protection and a 1 gallon Coleman water jug. The track was easy to follow, even in the dark, and I made good progress. The false dawn took place at about 5.30 and I was then able to ditch my blanket as the sun came up at about 6.30. I reached our site at about 8.30 and our people there just stood and stared, because they could not believe the sight of a crazy Ingiliz with golf umbrella suddenly appearing out of the desert.

I have numerous other memories of that Land Rover, many of them pleasant. When my wife and children visited we drove many hundreds of kilometres in it. Also, often at weekends, I was asked by other expatriates to take them into remote areas of the desert that I knew well and we had many enjoyable drives. Unfortunately, all good things come to an end and, when I changed company, I left my Land Rover behind, and I never again had a V8 Land Rover. While I had some other make very good 4x4s, I never really trusted any of them as much as I had my good old Landie.

Next issue, my later years in Oman and, very briefly, my year in Botswana, in Southern Africa.

Well I never, would you believe it?

- ◆ Dolphins sleep with one eye open
- ◆ Alfred Hitchcock was terrified of eggs
- ◆ For 20 years a cat served as honorary mayor of Talkeetna, Alaska
- ◆ A woman in Sweden who lost her wedding ring in her garden found it on a carrot 16 years later
- ◆ You are more likely to get a computer virus from a religious site than a pornography site
- ◆ The inventor of the Pringles container is now buried in one
- ◆ Humans are the only animals with chins
- ◆ 46BC was 445 days long and is the longest year in human history with two extra leap-months added by Julius Caesar
- ◆ One in 200 men are a direct descendant of Genghis Khan, ie around 19 million men on Earth
- ◆ A cornflake in the shape of the State of Illinois sold on eBay for \$1,350
- ◆ Bumblebees can fly higher than Mount Everest
- ◆ Germany uncovers 2,000 tons of unexploded bombs on average every year
- ◆ Wild chimps in Guinea drink fermented sap which contains about 3% alcohol by volume
- ◆ Male ring-tailed lemurs 'stink-fight' with each other by wafting scent at each other
- ◆ Goose-pimples evolved to make our ancestors' hair stand on end making them appear more threatening to their predators
- ◆ Cats can't taste sugar, they don't have sweet taste buds
- ◆ Lord Byron kept a live (tame) bear in his college dormitory
- ◆ Human hair grows about six inches a year, the only thing in the body that grows quicker is bone marrow
- ◆ Blushing is caused by a rush of adrenaline
- ◆ A singing birthday card has more computer power in it than the entire Allied Army had in WW2
- ◆ Pope Gregory IV declared war on cats claiming that they were instruments of Satan. This resulted in an increase in plague-carrying rats.
- ◆ President Richard Nixon was a talented musician playing piano, saxophone, clarinet, accordion and violin
- ◆ Thomas Edison did not invent the light bulb. He stole the idea from Warren de la Rue a British chemist who invented it 40 years earlier
- ◆ Lack of sleep was the cause of many major disasters including Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, the Challenger explosion. And Exxon Valdez oil spill for instance

Terrible Jokes courtesy of Oswestry U3a

1. Dad, are we pyromaniacs? Yes, we arson.
2. What do you call a pig with laryngitis? Disgruntled.
3. Writing my name in cursive is my signature move.
4. Why do bees stay in their hives during winter? Swarm.
5. If you're bad at haggling, you'll end up paying the price.
6. Just so everyone's clear, I'm going to put my glasses on.
7. A commander walks into a bar and orders everyone around.
8. I lost my job as a stage designer. I left without making a scene.
9. Never buy flowers from a monk. Only you can prevent florist friars.
10. How much did the pirate pay to get his ears pierced? A buccaneer.
11. I once worked at a cheap pizza shop to get by. I kneaded the dough.
12. My friends and I have named our band 'Duvet'. It's a cover band.
13. I lost my girlfriend's audiobook, and now I'll never hear the end of it.
14. Why is 'dark' spelled with a k and not c? Because you can't see in the dark.
15. Why is it unwise to share your secrets with a clock? Well, time will tell.
16. When I told my contractor I didn't want carpeted steps, they gave me a blank stare.
17. Bono and The Edge walk into a Dublin bar and the bartender says, "Oh no, not U2 again."
18. Prison is just one word to you, but for some people, it's a whole sentence.
19. Scientists got together to study the effects of alcohol on a person's walk, and the result was staggering.
20. I'm trying to organize a hide and seek tournament, but good players are really hard to find.
21. I got over my addiction to chocolate, marshmallows, and nuts. I won't lie, it was a rocky road.
22. What do you say to comfort a friend who's struggling with grammar? There, their, they're.
23. I went to the toy store and asked the assistant where the Schwarzenegger dolls are & he replied, "Aisle B, back."
24. What did the surgeon say to the patient who insisted on closing up their own incision? Suture self.
25. I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin awareness.

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

Memory 34

Scouting in Ellesmere

Remembered by Norman Dawson

The first I remember of the Boy Scouts was when I joined, and the Scoutmaster then was Dr. Drawbridge, who had his surgery in Talbot Street. At that time the troop would be about forty strong. It ceased during World War I. I believe the main reason was because Dr. Drawbridge took up an appointment at Ellesmere College, and there was no-one in Ellesmere at that time suitable to take on the duties of Scoutmaster - they were all at the war. So the Scout troop although not officially disbanded, became like a number of lost souls wandering in the wilderness without a leader. The one section of the Scouts which did, to a certain extent, keep together, was the band and they continued to meet quite occasionally to keep in practice. Eventually the war finished and a certain Captain Adam took up residence at the Seven Sisters. He was wounded in the war, and walked with a limp and with the aid of a walking stick. It was said that he rarely knew what it was to be without pain. Somehow or other the members of the Scout band discovered that he might be interested in helping to re-form the Scout troop.

A group from the band (Jack Chetwood, Baden Powell Chetwood, Fred Gregory, Cassie Hughes and Douglas Edge) who all lived in Watergate Street, accompanied by Douglas Roe, Ellesmere's barber who also lived in Watergate Street, went to see Captain Adam, who was reported to be very interested, and a meeting of all scouts who had served in the former troop was convened and held, I think, in the Coach house of The Grange, the residence of Major Keith Needham who had recently come to reside there, and who was a great friend of Captain Adam; both gentlemen being interested in re-starting the scout movement in Ellesmere. The meeting was a great success, and the wheels were set in motion for the formation of what turned out to be the most successful era of scouting in Ellesmere's history.

Captain Adam became Scoutmaster, and Major Needham, Tom Jones (Red Lion), and Alan Ashley became Assistant Scoutmasters; and the troop grew and grew until it reached its peak of one hundred and twenty, and I believe I am right in saying that in spite of repeated requests by the County Federation to form two or more troops, we refused. I believe the rule throughout the scout world was that a troop should not exceed fifty or thereabouts. One main reason for holding out was that if the troop was split into two, then one troop would not have our beloved Captain Adam as Scoutmaster, and no way was that to happen, so I believe we were in the end, granted a special dispensation. Our weekly meetings were for a time held at The Grange or the Seven Sisters, and then we moved to the boathouse and our headquarters was the wooden hut which housed the Mere Centre project. I think some Ellesmere historians say that this hut originally came from Park Hall Camp, Oswestry, but I have always been under the impression that it was purchased from Bettisfield Park Camp.

We had an excellent band, and as I recall the combination was as follows, and I give as many names as I can: 2 side drums (Albert Harris and Harry Hawkins) 4 kettle drums (Fred Gregory, Douglas Edge, Oliver (Buffer) Hood and Harry (Cassie) Hughes. 6 bugles (Hubert Sellars, Baden Powell Chetwood, Bob Chetwood), big drum (Clive Jones) and comet (Jack Chetwood).

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The band would start off with the bugles, then the comet would come in with a melody like 'Marching through Georgia' or a World War I song, then the bugles would come crashing in to finish it off. A short pell of drums only and then off again. For a Scout band it was some band, and about once a month the people of Ellesmere were given a treat, or so we firmly believed. We would form up on the road outside the boathouse, the flag bearer in front, then the Troop Leader (Sid Lawrence), next the band, and then the ordinary scouts in patrols, the patrol leader being in front of his own particular patrol. We thought we were the 'bees' knees'. The parade would march off to the beat of one drum, and then opposite the Red Lion all hell would be let loose. The command 'March at attention' would be given, and kettle and side drums would crash out, and soon after the bugles would blare forth, as, with now grim faces, shoulders back and in step we sallied forth to give the people of Ellesmere that long awaited treat. Adoring and proud mothers would be standing on their door steps waving and coo-cooing to their particular loving offspring, but those waved or coo-cooed at looked neither to right nor left, but carried on, eyes front, the grim look becoming even more grim. This was no time for frivolity - this was very serious stuff, and so after encircling the town we returned, triumphant, to our headquarters.

The Scout troop continued to be very successful. The annual camps and adventure weekends were held. An annual swimming gala came into being. Visiting swimmers from Oswestry, Wrexham, Shrewsbury etc., accustomed to bath swimming, captured all the short distance events. The only event we Ellesmereans won was the race to swim the mere, across and back. Clive Jones won this quite a few times. The first big Jamboree was held at Arrowe Park, Birkenhead, and the Ellesmere troop, or as many as possible of that troop, attended and put on a display. Some scouts were unable to attend for the whole period, and they cycled to Birkenhead one day and returned the next.

Harry Davies was one of these cyclists. It showed the keenness in scouting in Ellesmere at this time. Captain Adams also invented a 'truck cum tent'. It served as a two-wheeled truck and could very quickly be transformed into a tent or hut; the floor of the truck forming the roof, supported by the four shafts and the sides being formed by canvas sheeting. The wheels also provided a stabling effect, I cannot remember how, but I do know it was very good indeed.

There is an age limit, I think sixteen, as to how long one can remain an active scout, and many of us were reaching this age, but were reluctant to give up our scouting activities. Fortunately a senior branch of the Scouts had been instituted, called Rover Scouts, and a troop of Rover Scouts was formed in Ellesmere. It had a membership of about twenty plus, and did some excellent work, mainly helping the younger scouts. An annual Scout Concert became a very popular event in the Ellesmere social calendar. These concerts started off in Trimpley Hall, but became so popular that it was soon transferred to the old Town Hall and played to full houses on about three or four nights.

I recall one show we put on included a minipantomime entitled 'Babes-Cinda-Wood'. This was a mixture, need I say, of Cinderella and Babes in the Wood. In the middle of all these happenings a new Scout Hut was built on land off Wharf Road, and which, I understand, is still in use by the present Ellesmere troop. During all this time the influence of Captain Charles Adam, who eventually became Scout County Commissioner for the whole of Shropshire, was for ever prominent. What a man! Every scout thought the world of him. He collapsed and died whilst shopping in Shrewsbury on the 18th January, 1958 aged 68. He was, in every sense of the words - **A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN.**

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Memory 35

Policing in Ellesmere in the 1920's

Remembered by Norman Dawson

My first memories of policemen in Ellesmere were of Sergeant Noakes, a fairly hefty chap, and Harris the Bobby, as he was affectionately known.

Both used to patrol the streets of the town with their walking sticks and with measured tread - sometimes singly and sometimes together. They never seemed to be in a hurry. In any case, there never seemed to be anything to hurry about. The main trouble would usually occur at turning out time at the many pubs in Ellesmere in those days, and never seemed to be anything too serious. The habitual drunks were well known to the bobbies, and it was usually a case of seeing these drunks safely home.

The kids in the town were on the whole well behaved. I don't mean to imply that all the kids were angels. Plenty of them were full of mischief, but it was all in good fun, and there was no vandalism. We were all too busy enjoying ourselves to worry about that.

An example of 'rough justice' in those times ; 'Johnny Bloggs' would be taking three or four apples from Mr. So-and-so's garden when he espied one of the bobbies coming along. He hid, and later, safe (so he thought) in the knowledge that he had not been seen, crept stealthily away. Two days later Johnny would be walking along the street when 'Wham', it was one of the bobbies' walking sticks landing across his buttocks. A stern voice would say 'Don't let me see you in Mr. So-and-so's orchard again, or else'.

Memory 36

Tennis in Ellesmere

Remembered by Norman Dawson

Tennis in Ellesmere, between the wars was very active. there were three clubs - the Wharf, the Avondale and the Carlton. The Wharf Club, consisting mainly of members of the Congregational and Methodist Churches, was situated in the far corner of the wharf meadow and had just the one court. The Avondale was situated on the right hand side of the road leading to Lee, about half way between Birch Farm and the canal bridge. It had two courts. The third, the Carlton, was situated in the Cremome Gardens and had two courts; one near the putting green and the other on the left hand side just past the exit to Swan Hill.

This latter court was blessed with a quite attractive little pavilion. This was a very pleasant court, but unfortunately was surrounded by trees. All three clubs had large memberships.

Another court was at the rear of 'Beaumont', Church Street, at that time occupied by Mr. Charles H. Davies, who also owned the garage opposite. It was an excellent hard court and was very popular. It was reserved by Mr. Davies for him and his friends on two or three nights per week, and was open to the public at a fee on remaining nights. Just before the second World War broke out tennis tournaments galore were held to raise funds for the various needy efforts expected should war break out. Some of these tournaments were quite big affairs, and in addition to the courts mentioned above courts at The Grange and the Higher Grange were also used.

More Memories in the next issue

MOTORING MEMOIRS OF CHRIS STRETTON, b1950 Part 7

One outcome of water privatisation was that Welsh Water set up an International part of the business and I was asked to do a lot of overseas work thereafter, visiting countries around the world. Most of the time transport was provided by the local clients and this could be quite scary at times. One particular event occurred after I flew into Prague in 1994 at the start of one job.

We were met at the airport by Darius, a driver from the water company for which we were working and loaded up for the journey north. We were three in the car in addition to the driver, with luggage for our ten day visit. I was in the front with my suitcase on my lap. It was foggy as we headed out of Prague on a fast, motorway standard, dual carriageway. Cars were steaming past us dangerously and visibility, not good anyway, was made worse by the fact that Darius didn't switch on his windscreen wipers. It's difficult to comment on the driving technique of a complete stranger in a situation like this but it got to the point where I had to suggest that he use the wipers. Big mistake – he just went faster now that he could see better!

After about 15 miles we started to see construction signs and arrow boards to control the traffic but on we sped. When he noticed these he asked me '*what are those signs...what are those signs...*' then, more panicky, '*what are those f***ing signs*', at which point we ran out of road! This was the end of the newly-constructed section of motorway and traffic was being directed off here back onto the local road. Full lock at 60 mph on wet and muddy tarmac doesn't do what you need it to do! We slid forward, off the road and into deep mud, thankfully coming to rest with no serious injuries. Then I smelled petrol: the fuel tank or pipe must have been ruptured when we dropped off the road. Quickly out of the car and beating a hasty retreat, we had to wade through deep mud: not the best way to treat my shoes and suit but we all three concurred that we were grateful we had had the accident, and survived, as it was looking as though we were building up to something much worse prior to the event.

There was a crowd of locals watching it all happen. Apparently it was a regular event in the fog! Our driver was hauled off to the local Police station and we had to await another driver and vehicle to take us the rest of the way to Teplice, thankfully at a much more sensible pace! As we left the site of the accident we watched as Darius and some helpers were trying to pull the front wing off the wheel with a chain attached to a tree.

The job involved a lot of travelling, visiting water and sewage assets throughout the company's area over two weeks. On the first day the driver who had been assigned to me for the duration picked me up from the hotel and we headed off for the first appointment of the day looking for the route off the Teplice ring road. He clearly had no idea where we were going as he couldn't find the exit that he need and had to refer to a map. This he did by stopping in the overtaking lane of the ring road. Hard to believe but true! His driving didn't much improve throughout the day, on one occasion having to make six attempts at a hill start on a road junction without stalling.

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Lucky to be back in the office in one piece after my day's meetings, which themselves were successful, I told the project leader that I would not be doing any more site visits unless I could drive myself! The only obstacle to this was the fact that I had not brought my Driving Licence. Thankfully a phone call to my wife resulted in a copy being faxed through, which satisfied the hire company, and I drove myself around the area for the rest of the project.

In April 1997 I enjoyed a day at the Prescott Hill Climb Drivers' School. Bill Goodman, Mum's then husband, was a key person at Prescott and bought the experience for me for my birthday. My Vectra wasn't the best car for this activity but I still managed to improve my climbs through the day, knocking about four seconds of my initial time.

Next year we holidayed in Italy, driving down in the Vectra where there we visited Vesuvius. To get to the caldera one first drives most of the way up the volcano to park and then walk up the rest of the way. Having done this we drove back down, entering rush hour traffic back on the flat. As I braked for the first set of traffic lights...nothing...foot went to the floor! Thankfully I managed to stop safely with the hand brake. There was an Opel garage in Pompeii, next to the hotel where we were staying, so I thought there would be a good chance of getting a repair to the Vauxhall. It transpired that the faulty master cylinder was different on an Opel, which necessitated the AA arranging for us to collect a hire car from Naples for the journey home and for the Vectra to be repatriated on a lorry!

In 1998, I realised that I now needed to do something to make up for my lost motorbiking years and first bought a Triumph Trident.

This got me back on the road but, with its oil leaks and other 'standard British bike characteristics' I soon realised that I'd long since moved on from needing to fettle my wheels and that what I needed was a bike to ride without any mechanical complications and demands.

JTs in Swansea were importing low-mileage, second-hand Honda CBR600s from Florida by the container load at this time. I bought one of these, which came with a free two day training package, provided by an ex-Police motorcycle rider. The training was a welcome extra as I had never ridden a Japanese bike, with brake and gear levers transposed, and I was in the high risk category of 'born again bikers'!

Towards the end of 1998 I had the chance to take my Dad on the pillion for what would be his last two-wheeled experience. He loved it...a great experience for him, no doubt stirring many memories from his earlier years, and a fantastic memory for me as one of my last shared experiences before he died in 1999.

Then in 1999, with a group of friends, I realised a long-held ambition to experience the TT. We stayed in a rented house in Douglas and had a great week. I didn't find the racing that exciting as it's against the clock rather than the wheel to wheel combat of a circuit, but getting up early to ride the circuit was a lot of fun.

In 2000 I was lucky enough to be given an early retirement package from Welsh Water and the company car had to go back. With ready cash I decided it would be good to prove my true motoring credentials and buy an Alfa Romeo. At the time Eric Ashmoles was the agent in Swansea so I headed there to enquire as to what sort of deal they could offer me for a cash purchase. Surprised that they could not offer any incentive, let alone a discount, I left needing a Plan B.



Local information

Age UK Befriending Service

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

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



Take 1 minute each day and help fight the outbreak.

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

Urgent Care Centres

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

PLEASE CONTINUE TO KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR YOUR NEIGHBOURS

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

www.ellesmerecovidsupportgroups.org.uk

Shropshire Council Helpline: 0345 678 9028

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



Pastoral Support from the Churches in Ellesmere

Rev'd Pat Hawkins St Mary's Church

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

St Mary's Ellesmere:

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

However, some services are streamed and are on You Tube



The
**Cellar
Church**
ELLESMERE

Pastor Phil Wright 'The Cellar Church'.

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

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

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

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

Rev Julia Skitt Ellesmere Methodist Church

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

Ellesmere Methodist Church Services can be streamed from:

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

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

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster - Sundays at 11.00am

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

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



Ellesmere Catholic Convent Chapel

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

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

