



May 27 2021 Issue 39

Probus Covid-19 Lockdown
Newsletter 2021

In issue :39

- From The Editor. *Paul*
- Inspiration for Christmas. *Peter Sanderson*
- Speakers corner. *Editor*
- From the Crow's Nest. *Jeremy*
- Speakers report
- History of St. Mary's Church Ellesmere. *By Estelle Parker*
- A Potted History of Shropshire. *Paul*
- My Motoring Years part 7 *Brian Rodgers*
- Extracts from the Memories Series of Booklets Book 6. *Published by the Ellesmere Society. Submitted by Paul*
- Useful Local Information. *Editor*
- Pastoral Support. *Faith groups*

Dear all.

Another confusing week depending where you are living in the country, who knows what Boris's freedom plan will be. All being well the rules will be relaxed a bit more.

If they are we could start meeting again at the Comrades Club. Please reply to this email and let the committee know if it would be worth getting a live speaker for August.

Best wishes

Paul

Inspiration for a Christmas Zoom Meeting? But I hope we don't need to!

<https://enchantmentathamilton.org/20200601ForTheLongestTime.mp4>

Thanks to Peter Sanderson

Speaker's Corner

At our next Probus Zoom meeting on Thursday 20th MAY at 10.30am the speaker will be David Skillen speaking to us about 'The Bentley Boys'

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

Views from the Crow's Nest

Dear Probus friends, I hope that you and yours, friends and neighbours are keeping as well as possible and have been able to enjoy the recent sunshine break between the seemingly eternal showers. The



crescendo of lawn-mowers is about to happen at the weekend, we are following the recent eco-friendly advice and leaving a patch of long grass with insect-friendly flower-seeds to help the pollinators. It was good to see a hedgehog snuffling across the lawn last week after dark.

It is good also to see more folks out and about in Ellesmere and generally with smiles on their faces, with summer holidays around the corner our local businesses and shops will hopefully see yet more improvement in their footfall.

There is understandably some over-excitement out there, the news tells us that house prices in Wales have risen 11% over the past twelve months and houses are being sold unseen within hours of coming on the market. Some mid-range properties are selling for £20,000-£30,000 over the asking

price. Let's hope that it isn't a bubble starting that will burst in due course.

Whilst the pendulum swings to and fro on what we are advised that we can and cannot do in the Covid-19 situation it seems wise not to plan too much and to take one step at a time. Those of us who are able to enjoy gardening have been heartened by the lush growth recently and it won't be long before the smells of barbecues waft across our wonderful town again, children splash in paddling pools and the odd bottle of Prosecco fills clinking glasses. Meantime, stay safe and in good spirits.

Thanks as ever to Paul for his sterling efforts in putting our Newsletters together. They are sent far and wide and receive excellent feedback.

Any articles that you can contribute will always be appreciated.

With best wishes,

Jeremy

26th May 2021

Ellesmere Probus Club Zoom 20th May 2021, chaired by Bill Ferries, Vice-President

Speaker: James Harrison - 'My life as a prison officer'

Bill welcomed and introduced James who is Ellesmere born and bred. James gave a very interesting and informative talk about his ten years working in prisons of differing categories. He is also actively involved in local voluntary work including Chair of Ellesmere Cricket Club and as commentator at Wrexham football club.

James joined the Prison Service as an entry level trainee in 2003 then became a hostage negotiator in 2005 working mainly on riots and protests. 2006-2008 he moved to the juvenile drugs programme working with 15-18 year olds on drug awareness, detox-ing and re-habilitation. From 2008-2012 James was promoted to Senior Officer responsible for a prison wing with 6-7 officers working to him. 2012 saw him move to prison reception dealing with incomers, transfers and discharges before his final posting to Drake Hall women's prison. A government restructure in 2013 which cut salaries substantially and increased the retirement age to 68 triggered James to leave the Service and take a new career at Muller, Market Drayton as a logistics manager. He has kept a close network of trusted friends ever since.

Prisons are perceived by the public from TV, government, prisoner and staff views and experiences. The truth is a mix of all those.

James spent most of his time at Stoke Heath near Market Drayton, an old WW2 airbase. Inmates are given a range of training opportunities eg bricklaying, electrical, welding, woodwork etc. Some have been trained in railway track-laying for the HS2 programme. It was a 'Borstal' in the 1950's giving 'short-sharp-shock' punishment. The Strangeways riots of the 1980s gave rise to a vast re-think and reform of prisoner's rights and treatments. The relatively new 'Super-Prison' in Wrexham houses 3000 prisoners, James said that it had not been properly finished or staffed. When opened it took in some 'difficult' individuals from prisons across the country. The younger and inexperienced staff are at risk of being 'conditioned' by the inmates, many older more 'jailcraft-experienced' officers have left the Service taking with them the interpersonal-skills needed to develop effective relationships/trust with prisoners. Trainees have a mix of 12 weeks college and on-the-job training.

The life of a typical prisoner: On first arrival at prison from the court the person will have a written confirmation of their sentence. Two prison officers will receive them, taking fingerprints, name/s and photographs followed by a strip-search (not naked) to detect any inappropriate objects or substances and metal-detector test. If that test is positive they will be isolated until the internal metal object is 'passed'. Then onto a nurse health-check. Awareness of any mental health issues is also important as self-harm and suicide attempts in prison are not uncommon (women more than men). It is estimated that 84% of prisoners have a mental health condition across a wide spectrum. Next in the process the person will be taken for a meal, not of a high standard, and a drink then led to the 'Induction Wing'. Familiarisation with the First Night Officer to check for instance any gang affiliations (what goes on on the streets carries on inside prison). The prison is designed in an H-shape with each of the four 'ends' housing 72 cells. The new prisoner will now be allocated a cell, no-one is ready for that shock first-time. Each cell is 6 by 9, a half-inch -opening barred window opposite the door and contains a tv on a shelf, metal-framed bed, thin mattress, sometimes a bookshelf, toilet with sink at the back. First-night kit includes soap, shower gel, toothbrush/paste, comb, a chocolate bar and a drink. Prisoners are measured as 'Standard' (90minutes association with other prisoners), 'Enhanced' (trusted, unlocked all day to perform cleaning and food-serving duties) or 'Basic' (no association permitted and only one phone call per week). A merit/de-merit system enables prisoners to move between these levels. If on 'Basic' they can lose access to their trainers shoes which are often seen as a status-symbol. Some show which gang affiliations they have by the way that they tie their shoelaces. James said that this kind of secret messaging is a continual 'battle of wits' to keep an eye on and was a great challenge for the Officers. Bullying is a massive problem in this environment.

Cont. page 4

A canteen would arrive once a week from which inmates could buy sweets, biscuits, drinks and items from the Argos catalogue provided there were no safety issues over those items. Drones are used these days to deliver illicit items into prisons but other methods such as dead birds packed with items to be collected by the gardeners are another method.

97% of the time everyone gets on relatively amicably, staff often seen as father-figures to the youngsters (15-18 or 18-21 year olds) as well as authority. 15-18 year olds can engage in a lot of fighting but mass-brawls are uncommon. Throwing one punch each and 'honours even' is often enough for them to make their point and then be contained. In previous riots at Stoke Heath an entire wing was destroyed except for the goldfish which were handed out to the Officers to save. James said that he had been assaulted only once, hit on the head with a chair. In those situations highly trained 'Control and Restrain' staff are on hand to contain the person with pain-free body-locks (unless they fight back). One double-murder inmate who was 17 years old and 6'6", 18 stone proved to be a difficult challenge. There are 3 staff to 1 in those situations. Last resort is hand-cuffing and segregating before interview with the Prison Governor the following day.

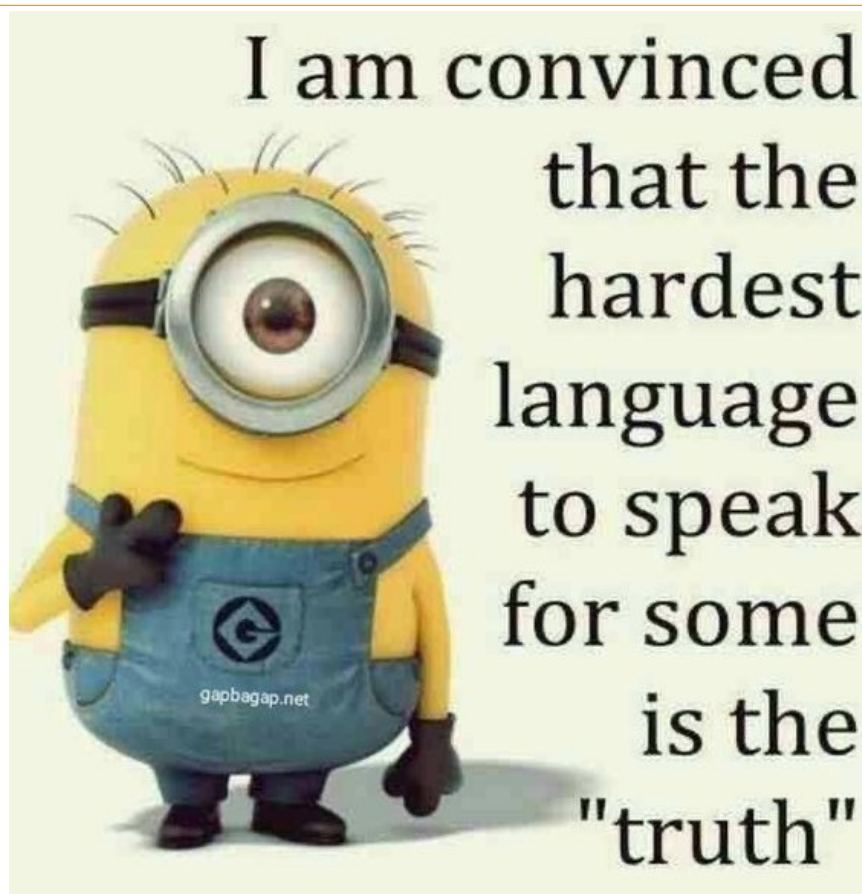
Breakfast is a pack of cereal, sugar and UHT milk taken back upstairs until 8.30am when cells are unlocked. Work and lessons follow (eg IT, Maths, Cookery up to GCSE level for some).

12.00 lunch, 12.30pm locked up again, 1.30pm work/education/gym. 5.00pm tea, 5.30pm locked up again. 6.00pm unlocked for association (mixing together in communal areas).

Visitors have to apply for slots and are monitored closely by the staff including 'pat-down' search and drug-dog procedures on arrival. Some prisons still have active gallows-rooms because although capital punishment is not legal in this country some crimes still carry the notional death-penalty.

James said that a lot of prisoners re-offend because they are released back into the same house, associates and circumstances that they had lived in before prison, it is difficult for them to turn against their peer-group. National Service might help them develop a self-discipline and sense of self-worth. It costs £43,000 per year to keep a prisoner 'inside'. James' last posting was to Drake Hall Open women's prison at Eccleshall Staffs. There the buildings are not locked but are alarmed. Prisoners run a hair-salon and nail-bar for instance, some are involved in external call-centres.

Following answers to a number of wide-ranging questions from Probus members Bill thanked James for his excellent and informative talk which had been much appreciated and led a round of applause.



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

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

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

The master mason was given a house for his use while the building work, which he supervised, was being undertaken, and he might have been given a fur-trimmed robe annually.

This reflected his high social standing he ranked with the esquires and would be received into the patron's household and invited to eat there. In pictures in mediaeval manuscripts he is depicted carrying his compasses setsquare. Building progress depended on the weather, and the seasons. Usually no building work took place from All Saints' Day (November 1st) until Candlemas (February 2nd), and in these three months (November, December, January) work was confined to designing and cutting stone.

Working hours were from sunrise to sunset very long hours in the summer. The men were given time off for breakfast, for lunch and for a drink (sometimes they had to queue up at the tavern for this, and this took time), and in the long summer days they were allowed a short rest (siesta).

On Saturdays and feast days work stopped soon after midday. The stonemasons were journeymen, usually receiving a daily wage, paid weekly (about 4d a day before the Black Death 1349-51 and about 6d a day after it). The scaffolding was wooden poles lashed together, (though from pictures it looks as if it was used rather sparingly). Wooden platforms were built on to pieces of wood set into holes left for that purpose in the masonry. The stonemasons clambered up the ladders with the mortar in their hods, and pulleys and various machines were used for hauling up the stone. Wheelbarrows were used for carrying stones close to the building. The mortar was two parts sand to one part lime, with water, or for very fine work mortar was made with lime, water and eggs and the eggshells and if not enough eggs were available then ox-blood was used. Lime was made by firing layers of limestone between layers of charcoal. Sometimes pieces of charcoal were left in with the lime, and can be seen to this day in the mediaeval mortar in our church tower.

Sometimes the mediaeval stonemasons made mistakes, and a spoiled or faulty piece would have to be taken out of the stone and be replaced by another piece shaped to fit. The new piece was stuck in position with pitch, and an example of this is seen in one of the pillars in S. Anne's Chapel.

A master mason would sometimes leave his mark a special design or 'signature'. The stonework of our church has two such marks, discovered by the stonemason working on the tower in 1995, but in places inaccessible to the public.

Building work needed a constant supply of money for materials and for wages. The money was raised as it is now, by taxes, gifts and appeals, and collecting boxes in shops; also by the diversion of funds from specific estates. Appeals encouraged the faithful to make special offerings, which would buy some salvation and help to finance the building project. People would also be encouraged to buy indulgences: for example, the people of Rouen were granted permission to eat butter during Lent in exchange for money to pay for the building of a new tower for the cathedral. (The giving of the money would buy salvation, in the form of days off Purgatory).

Cont. page 6

During all this building and construction work some of the Knights would be seen in Ellesmere certainly the Preceptor, to inspect the building progress. If there were an accident the injured person, a stonemason perhaps, would be carried on horseback to Ralston to be tended by the Brethren in the sick bay there.

As the outer building work progressed, so too did the construction and detail inside. Pillars and arches were built, and the masons carved stiff-leaf design to adorn them.

The stone sculpture of the Queen of Heaven, the set of Sedilia, the Squint, the (old) Font and the Rood Screen all date from this time. The Queen of Heaven sculpture shows the Blessed Virgin Mary crowned and enthroned, with an orb in her left hand and the Infant Christ wrapped in a shawl on her right arm. They are surrounded by angels, or cherubim, and a finely carved canopy once protected them all though all are now eroded. It is thought the Queen of Heaven was set in the stonework above the main door, where people could see her as they entered.

The Sedilia were set in the south wall of the Sanctuary with fine multifoil arches above them. These were and of course still are seats for the clergy, and some of the Knights of St. John must have sat here, and later the Chantry priests as well.

A piscina of the same design was set in the east wall just south of the altar for washing the sacred vessels after the Mass. It has now been made into an aumbry where the Reserved Sacrament is always kept. The Squint or Hagioscope gave a view of the High Altar from the other side of the north wall, enabling lepers and, other diseased people to see the elevation of the Host, and join in the celebration of the

Mass. Across the entrance to the Chancel was a carved oak Rood Screen, above which was a wooden Rood or Cross. (Rood is the Anglo-Saxon word for Crucifix or Cross), and on either side of the Rood were carved figures of Our Lady and S. John. We still have the Rood Screen, its oaken panels worked with an adze it is now across the entrance to S. Anne's Chapel, with a central door carved in the middle of the nineteenth century to replace the lost mediaeval one, The slots into which the Rood, Our Lady and St. John fitted are still there at the top of the Rood Screen but the Rood and figures are gone. We also still have the font from this time now very worn. (We have a fine 19th century copy of it.)

The Knights of St. John - or the Knights Hospitallers as they were known -were closely connected with Ellesmere for some three hundred years: a very long time. The chief of the Order, the Prior, appointed each new incumbent here. The first two parish priests the Prior appointed were chaplains of the Order of St. John. At least one parish priest is thought to have died of the plague here (John de Wombourne, instituted June 4th, 1313, died twelve years later, October 13th, 1325), and he was followed by Griffin, son of Richard de la Pole in 1325, who died twenty-four years later of the Black Death (July 28th, 1349). (The Black Death was raging in Shropshire in the July and August of 1349 and then in the September it raged in Cheshire.) Just over a fortnight later another priest was appointed, note the very short interregnum. A priest was needed to take the many funerals, to comfort the bereaved and to try to allay the panic and terror.

The new priest was John de Ellesmere, Chaplain he would have come from a local family and then trained with the Knights of St. John, becoming one of their chaplains. He was presented to the living of Ellesmere on August 19th, 1349. Just one month later he too was dead (September 19th).

Meanwhile, during all the building work, there had been the Crusades, and some had gone from Ellesmere. and the church he had set out from.

Cont. on page 7

Those going on crusade would have prepared themselves for the long journey, and they would have prayed in St. John's Chapel before setting out, commending themselves, and their families, to God. Some would have said farewell for ever. There must be many whose names we do not know but at least one name we do know, and that was Hamo (or Hamon) le Strange. Hamo le Strange went on crusade in 1271 with Prince Edward (later Edward I). He had been given the manor and castle of Ellesmere by the King, Henry III, for good service over many years (not the manor with the church: the le Stranges had the castle manor and the Knights of St. John the church manor), and he was one of the knight companions of the prince, Edward. In the autumn of 1271 Hamo set out from Ellesmere and went on crusade with the prince and about a thousand crusaders, through England and France and then sailing via Sicily and Cyprus, eventually reaching the Holy Land and landing at Acre. Acre was an important port with fortified town walls, and this was where the Knights of St. John had built their new large hospital and headquarters. The magnificent 13th century Hospitallers' Hall with its massive round pillars is there to this day (built the same time as our church).

Hamo helped in the fighting at Acre and at Nazareth, and a few months later he married Isabella, the Dowager Queen of Cyprus and Lady of Beirut. (She had married the King of Cyprus as a child, and he had died in 1267. She had inherited the Lordship of Beirut from her father.)

She was only in her late teens or early twenties when she married Hamo le Strange, Lord of Ellesmere, in 1272. Hamo. Died only a year or so later in 1273 or March 1274 probably only in his thirties or forties. We do not know whether he was wounded or had fallen sick. He may well have been taken into the hospital where the Brethren of St. John would have tended and nursed him and the Chaplain would have given him the Last Sacrament. It is very likely that after Hamo's death his friends and companions would bring some relics back to this country and the church he had set out from.

Two small earthenware jars, or pipkins, were brought back, one thought to have contained soil from the Holy Land and the other water from the River Jordan we do not know whether they were Hamos, but It is possible. Some leather footwear - a sandal or part of a boot decorated with braid - was also brought back, and some iron artefacts which are possibly remains of armour, or horse armour.

Also, two whole barrow loads of soil from the Holy Land were brought back to Ellesmere Holy Land soil was shipped back to this country and given. to churches which had sent people to go on crusade or pilgrimage. The precious soil was usually put in a special cavity somewhere in the church. St. Mary's, Shrewsbury, had two barrowloads, so did St John the Baptist's, Bishops Castle, and also St. Catherine's, Criccieth, all kept safely in the church wall, which would receive extra sanctification with its presence.

The precious relics from the Crusades which were brought back to Ellesmere were kept safely and were finally put in a secret cavity in the tower under the mullion of the south window of the belfry. The secret cavity was 4 ft. by 1 ft. 6 in. by 2. ft., and could be reached only from the outside, by removing a certain stone 6 in. Wide.

More to come in the next issue

A Potted History of Shropshire

The border with Wales was defined in the first half of the 16th century - the hundreds of Oswestry (including Oswestry) and Pimhill (including Wem), and part of Chirbury had prior to the Laws in Wales Act formed various Lordships in the Welsh Marches. Clun hundred went briefly to Montgomeryshire at its creation in 1536 but was returned to Shropshire in 1546.

The present day ceremonial county boundary is almost the same as the historic county's.

Notably there has been the removal of several exclaves and enclaves. The largest of the exclaves was Halesowen, which became part of Worcestershire in 1844 (now part of the West Midlands county), and the largest of the enclaves was Herefordshire's Farlow in south Shropshire, also transferred in 1844, to Shropshire. Alterations have been made on Shropshire's border with all neighbouring English counties over the centuries. Gains have been made to the south of Ludlow (from Herefordshire), to the north of Shifnal (from Staffordshire) and to the north (from Cheshire) and south (from Staffordshire) of Market Drayton. The county has lost minor tracts of land in a few places, notably north of Tenbury Wells to Worcestershire, and near Leintwardine to Herefordshire.

The origin of the name "Shropshire" is the Old English "Scrobbesbyrigscīr" (literally *Shrewsburyshire*), perhaps taking its name from Richard Scrob (or FitzScrob or Scrope), the builder of Richard's Castle near what is now the town of Ludlow. However, the Normans who ruled England after 1066 found both "Scrobbesbyrig" and "Scrobbesbyrigscir" difficult to pronounce so they softened them to "Salopesberia" and "Salopescira". **Salop** is the abbreviation of these.

When a council for the county was set up in 1888, it was called "Salop County Council". The name was never popular, with Ludlow MP Sir Jasper More raising an amendment to the 1972 Local Government Bill to rename the county "Shropshire" at the time the council itself opposed the change, although later, in 1980, would exercise its power to legally change the name of the county.

The Times noted in a 19 February 1980 article about the name change that "there was no record of why the name Salop County Council was adopted". The decision to make the change was taken on 1 March 1980, at a special meeting of the council, with 48 votes in favour versus five against. It came into effect on 1 April.

The term "Salopian", derived from "Salop", is still used to mean "from Shropshire". Salop can also mean the county town, Shrewsbury, and in historical records Shropshire is described as "the county of Salop" and Shrewsbury as "the town of Salop". There is a reference in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1948) to Shropshire being called Sloppesbury, and this name being shortened to Salop.

The Latin motto of *Floreat Salopia* (may Shropshire flourish) was originally used by the borough of Shrewsbury and was adopted in 1896 by Salop (or Shropshire) County Council when they received a grant of a coat of arms. The motto is now used in a number of other emblems associated with the county.

Another reason why Salop was unfavourable was the fact that if you add the letter 'E' and make it Salope, this is a French word which means 'Bitch' or 'Loose Woman'.

My last years of overseas motoring: Part 13 by *Brian Rodgers*

After my troubles with previous vehicles, I decided to have a Nissan Patrol. The Patrol was a very powerful vehicle, having 190 bhp from its 4.2 litre petrol engine, coupled with stump pulling torque. I proved that pulling power on several occasions. One day I was driving through the high sand dunes of the Empty Quarter when, on rounding a curve, I came across a Land Cruiser severely bogged down at the roadside. The Indian driver had never been to the Empty Quarter before and had not been warned never to leave the road. He, thinking that he was on the wrong road, had attempted a U-turn and had gone down on the soft verge. He had not used the 4x4 selector and, in 2-wheel drive, the car had sunk deep down to its back axle. He was so badly bogged that I doubted that I would be able to pull him. However, we dug considerable sand away from ahead of the wheels, then, after hitching the vehicles with a webbing sling, I took a short run and, as the sling tightened, there was a great lurch and the Cruiser came out. The Patrol had really come up trumps and it did the same many more times, even pulling one of our 3½ ton 'light' trucks out of deep sand.

While the Pajero had been very good at fording flooded wadis, the Patrol was better. Frequently I would drive into flowing wadis of which I knew exactly where the crossings lay. On one occasion during severe floods, I was first in a queue to enter a major wadi and I could see in my mirrors that several other 4x4s were following, including a Police Land Cruiser. I was travelling very gently, at perhaps 10 km/h, and making steady progress, but that was much too slow for the Police driver. He pulled out and passed the line of vehicles at a much higher speed, with a great bow wave ahead. I knew that if he did not pull back to my line he would miss the ford. He did not pull back and, sure enough, he nosed-dived into very deep water. I drove slowly ahead and passed the stationary Land Cruiser, whose engine cover was completely under water, and I saw three Police officers clambering out through the windows to climb on to the roof as the car sank even deeper. As I left the crossing, I looked in my mirror and saw all three officers perched on the roof.

Occasionally, such as when the Patrol was being serviced, I would use one of the four Ford F350 pickups that I had in my section. These were vehicles that had been ordered in the US by someone who knew little about desert driving. The engines were 7.2 litre turbo diesel V8s. They had been derated from 240 to 200 bhp but the trucks were still far too fast for local conditions, and did not have good traction. However, they were quite comfortable. They were normally reliable, except on one occasion when I was using one at the edge of the Empty Quarter, on a late morning in mid-summer. On these Fords all engine ancillaries were driven by a single serpentine belt. Things were going fine on my journey until, without warning, the drive belt tension pulley disintegrated and the belt fell off. When that happened, the water pump stopped pumping, the fan stopped blowing, the power steering became powerless, the brakes had no assistance, the alternator stopped producing sparks and the air conditioner stopped conditioning. Fortunately, I was only about 20 km from a crossroads where I knew that oil tankers were hauling crude every two hours or so. By driving the Ford slowly and stopping when the temperature gauge needle neared the top stop, I reached the crossroads in reasonable time. I then had a long wait in a very hot cab until, eventually, a Mack crude tanker came along and I was given a lift to our construction camp. There, the expatriate site manager could hardly believe his eyes when I stepped out of the tanker cab, rather dirty from the many traces of crude everywhere inside the truck cab. Fortunately, the site mechanic there had spares available and he was able to repair the Ford and I was on my way again, a few hours later.

Cont. page 10

Once, when the Patrol was being worked on and no Fords were available, I took a workshop Mitsubishi pick up to drive up to the Empty Quarter. As I drove I noticed how sluggish the vehicle seemed to be but I needed to reach my destination before nightfall and I did not stop to check things. However, the sluggishness was becoming worse and I noticed in my rear view mirror that the exhaust was laying out a considerable smoke screen. I did not stop, although my bladder suggested that I should, and I continued, with the car becoming slower and slower, and laying out a progressively heavier smoke screen. I managed to reach our camp shortly before dark and I went directly to the workshops and switched off. Out of interest, I tried the starter but the engine would not turn over. Next morning, I was shown the problem by the shop foreman. Somehow the caps on the tops of the camshaft support pedestals had cracked and the shaft had been lifting as it turned, with the result that the valves were opening partly only. Obviously the engine was being starved of air and that explained the reason for the sluggishness and the considerable smoke screens. I had been very lucky indeed not to have had the camshaft lift out completely.

After that incident I decided that, regardless of circumstances, for longer journeys, I would not use any cars other than my Patrol. However, shortly before my retirement and final departure from the Sultanate, I think the Patrol must have known that I was about to leave and the previously always reliable engine had its alloy cylinder head perforate at one of the combustion chambers. The engine began to lose water and to overheat badly. A new head (probably costing as much as the car was worth) was fitted and that seemed to be the end of problems, albeit, not completely so.

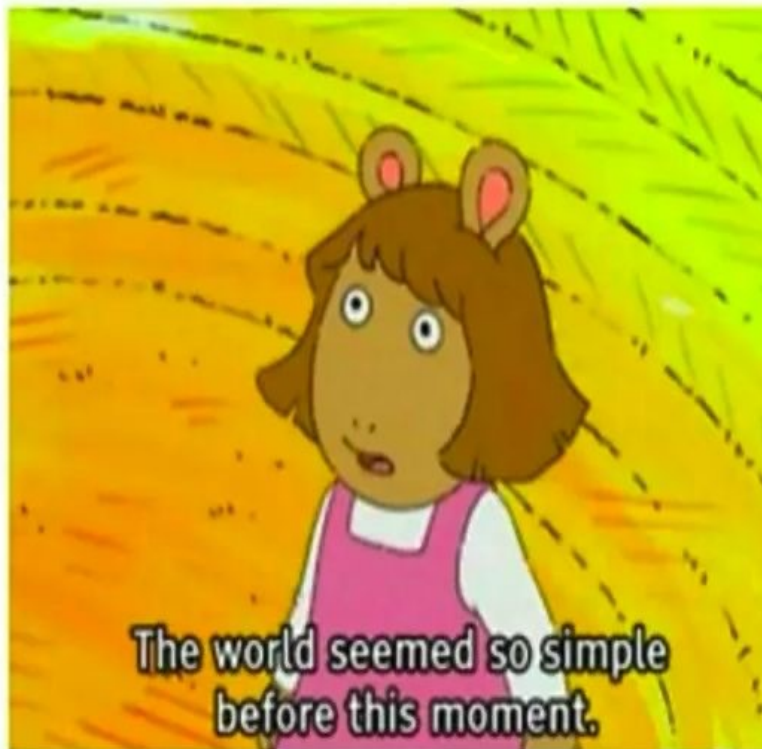
Under oil company regulations, vehicles working in the Interior had to be fitted with speed limiters, set at 80 km/h, although cars that were also used on main roads had a hidden limiter cut out switch. Those limiters were a frequent source of trouble and, on occasion, regardless of the switch position, the cut out could suddenly cut the fuel supply, sometimes completely. That happened with the Patrol on my wife's final visit to Oman. We were leaving the Occidental Concession near the Abu Dhabi border on a summer day when the shade temp was 118°F (American oil companies use Fahrenheit and don't mess with "God darned stupid Celsius, and metres") When we were about 50km from the town of Izki, the limiter went "peep" for no apparent reason and cut the fuel completely, and we came to a stop. No problem to bypass the limiter by making a bypass fuel line, or so I thought. However, with an ambient temperature as high as it was that day, trying to work in the engine compartment without burning myself was well nigh impossible! There was nothing to do except wait for the engine to cool. Included in my desert survival kit were two blankets, with which I rigged up a sunshade on the passenger side of the car for my wife.

Also in the kit I had a large supply of cold drinking water and I asked my wife to drink a one and half litre bottle, to prevent dehydration. After waiting for about 30 minutes, again I tried to bypass the limiter device on the fuel line but, Murphy's Law, my screwdriver was too short to reach the hose clip below the carb, and I could not move the hose. Allah was watching over us that day and shortly afterwards along came one of our desert trucks whose Muslim driver had the necessary screwdriver. The limiter was bypassed in minutes and the engine fired immediately and we were off, without delay. However, as we approached a town, a fresh problem arose; my wife had drunk a very large amount of water but had not perspired very much – readers may ask what she had to do then about her rather full bladder, particularly when, while she was partly hidden between the open passenger side doors, another vehicle appeared out of nowhere and drove almost alongside us.

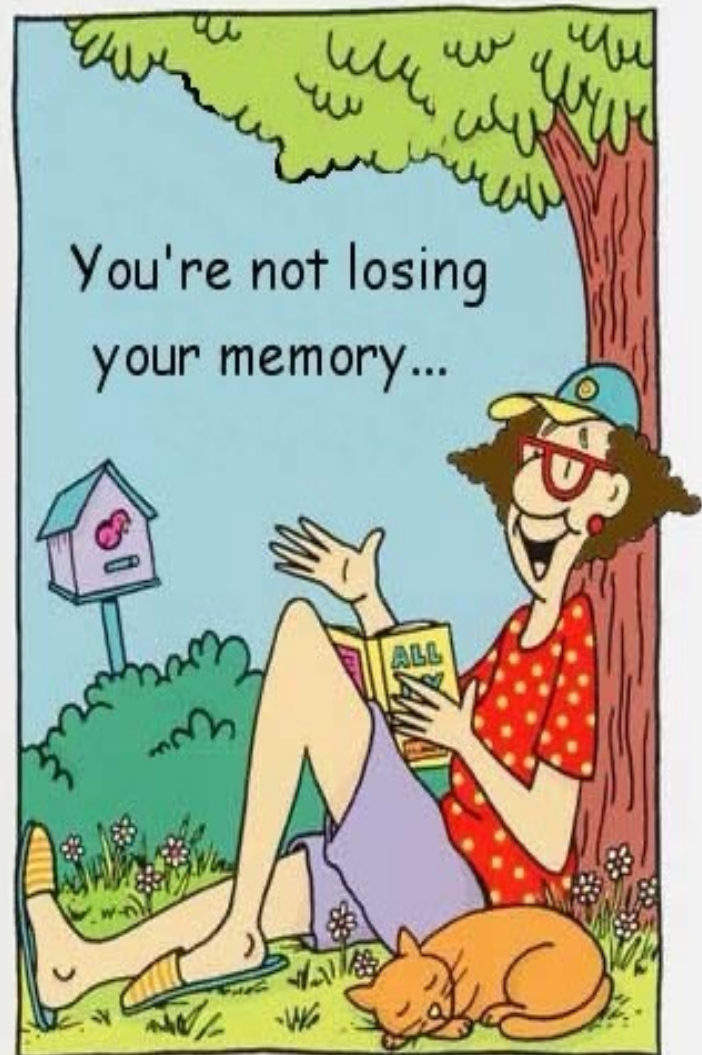
Cont. on Page 12

And so we come to the end. After many years in Africa and the Arab World, with the last twenty in the Sultanate of Oman, I decided that the time had come to retire. In many ways that was a very upsetting decision, but I did need to spend more time with my wife and family. The Sultanate to me was perhaps the most wonderful country I had known, with its many fascinating aspects, and to leave it was one of the sadder episodes in my life. Apart from leaving friends of many nationalities, I left behind years of driving on uncongested roads, fuel costing less than 15p per litre and lovely warm, sometimes very hot, sunny weather. I replaced those with traffic jams, fuel at well over £1 per litre, and grey skies with plenty rain, which frequently seems to arrive at the most inconvenient times. However, my interests in motoring did not stop on my retirement and I joined a local motor club and over recent years I have enjoyed many Club meetings and events, attended by the many interesting and likeable friends that we have made.

If you replace the "W" in Where, What and When with a "T" you answer the question



The world seemed so simple before this moment.



You're just really good at letting go of the past!

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

Booklets Published in early 2000 by the Ellesmere Society

Memory 39

The Canal In The First Half Of The 20th Century

Remembered by Perter Shephard

What of the people and the boats during these years? The majority of the "boat people" were born and bred to the life and in continuing the work maintained long family traditions. They were a race apart, both in manners and dress, and were poorly educated because of their incessant movement which did not allow for their children to have continuous education.

Government censuses emphasised the existence of a tight-knit community, the crews of most boats almost always having birth places on or near the canal. Because of the declining economic viability of canal carrying in the 1900's, there was a pronounced shift back to family boats as the wife and children provided a free crew. Life was tough because often the boats were on the move for twelve hours or more.

Living conditions on board were difficult due to the confined space. Attempts to regulate conditions led to the Canal Boats Acts. In 1901, fourteen boats on the canal were inspected and the report stated "The condition of the boats was fairly good and the occupants, being chiefly local residents, was satisfactory". But, in 1903, when thirteen boats were inspected the regulations regarding overcrowding, cleanliness and separation of the sexes were all infringed. However, things appear to have improved by the 1920's, as Mr. Hyde, latterly of the Canal Tavern, Frankton Locks, considered many canal boats to be "floating palaces". Entertainment was obtained in the town's public houses whilst staying overnight. The boatmen's' pay was very low. For example, when the Peates bought the fleet of eleven boats in 1921, they paid the crews on tonnage, 2 shillings and 10 pence per ton. About twenty tons was carried per week by each boat, so that if nothing else was carried each boat would earn about £3 per week. If other cargoes could be picked up, earnings rose to £5 per week. The crews were therefore eager to supplement their income. One method was to obtain free food from canal property or adjacent land. Most boats trailed a line of spoon bait to catch pike in the canal, some up to 2lbs in weight.

Horses and donkeys assumed a position of great importance in the lives of the "boat people", because as already mentioned all boats were horse drawn. Many privately owned boats often used pairs of donkeys, as they were cheaper to buy and maintain. Mr. Hyde, kept both horses and donkeys for hauling his boats, but working with pairs could be difficult on occasions. During one trip his mother was working a coal boat with two donkeys when for no apparent reason the boat suddenly stopped in Ellesmere tunnel. Having no lantern she used a shovelful of blazing coals from the stove to give some light and soon discovered the reason for the delay. One of the donkeys was pulling towards Ellesmere, and the other had turned round and was pulling in the opposite direction!

Two totally different boats from the past could still be seen on the canal during the first half of the 20th century. As the flow of water in the canal is very slow, any freezing over caused serious problems in the 19th century when the canal was the main artery of transport. Thus special "ice boats" were built and such a boat lay aground at Ellesmere. Made of wood it had a slatted wooden deck with a strong 'post at each end, supporting a stout, horizontally-placed iron bar. The bow was protected by iron. Several men stood on the deck on either side of the iron bar and gripping this firmly, rocked the boat vigorously from side to side to break up the ice, while six horses strained their hardest to keep the boat going forward. The man at the tiller endeavoured to steer a direct course.

Cont. page 14

The second boat was the last remaining packet passage, or passenger boat, the "Duchess-Countess". The Duke of Bridgewater, who built the canals which started the "Canal Age" ran packet boats by which passengers were conveyed at the rate of a penny a mile. He often travelled on them himself. The "Duchess-Countess" was built around 1800, and was one of the duke's original packet boats.

For nearly half a century she plied daily between Stockton Quay and Manchester. After that she carried mixed cargoes, finally being taken out of service in 1915.

After being left in a watery grave for 18 years she was refloated in 1934, refitted and brought on to the Ellesmere canal. Eventually, she was moored close to the small dock at Lower Frankton and used as a floating home. When she started to leak during the 1939-45 war she was lifted out of the water and placed on the bank, where the owner continued to live in her.

Trade on the canal had been dwindling from the start of the 20th century. Even during the 1914-18 war there was no extra demand and it served only local needs essentially.

For some time the government helped cover the losses, but this could not continue. On August 31st, 1921, the L.N.W.R. ceased carrying goods and sold its fleet of boats. From then on it maintained the canal "In the hope that the public will make use of it on payment of a toll". In 1922, the canal was acquired by the London Midland and Scottish Railway following regrouping. Ellesmere was to see commercial traffic become less and less until it ceased in the mid 1930's. From then on there was just a few maintenance boats and the rare pleasure boat.

Why then was the canal not closed like most of the others? Fortunately, back in 1829 a large reservoir had been built near Hurleston Junction. Also, some industrial concerns including the United Dairies on the wharf needed large quantities of water (most of which was returned to the canal) for condensing purposes. Also, farmers had come to rely on the canal for watering their cattle. To convey water for these purposes and to control its rate of flow adequately, a certain amount of maintenance was essential. In 1959, agreement was finally made with the Mid and South East Cheshire Water Board for them to carry water continuously from the River Dee to the Hurleston Reservoir. Once again the canal had been saved and would remain open.

Whilst the canal was supplying water, the limited maintenance that had been done by the L.M.S. before and during the war meant the canal was not fully navigable. L. T. C. Rolt, the man who did more than anyone to introduce so many to a love of the waterways had attempted to travel up the canal to Llangollen in 1947. He was forced to abandon his trip when he got to Ellesmere, but two years later he was back and found the canal in better condition and was able to proceed beyond Ellesmere and finally reached the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. By 1952, a rally of twenty five boats called at the town on their way up to Llangollen. Slowly the canal was coming back to life and the agreement in 1959 gave it the new lease of life enthusiasts were seeking. There would be many problems to overcome during the next forty years before the Ellesmere canal would once again be full of narrow boats giving pleasure to thousands each year and Ellesmere would have its own marina.

What of the people and the boats during these years? The majority of the "boat people" were born and bred to the life and in continuing the work maintained long family traditions. They were a race apart, both in manners and dress, and were poorly educated because of their incessant movement which did not allow for their children to have continuous education. Government censuses emphasised the existence of a tight-knit community, the crews of most boats almost always having birth places on or near the canal. Because of the declining economic viability of canal carrying in the 1900's, there was a pronounced shift back to family boats as the wife and children provided a free crew. Life was tough because often the boats were on the move for twelve hours or more. There would be many problems to overcome during the next forty years before the Ellesmere canal would once again be full of narrow boats giving pleasure to thousands each year and Ellesmere would have its own marina.

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)

