



DALGETY BAY PROBUS CLUB



Issue 9

1st September 2020



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Good morning Gentlemen and welcome to our ninth newsletter.

Have you all acquainted yourselves with Zoom? If you need any help or advice, please ask. The 37th AGM papers will be circulated to all members today and your invitation to attend the meeting will be sent out by email nearer the date, September 15th. The intention is generally to follow the usual AGM format but on this occasion will be limited to business as convener reports have been ongoing through our Newsletters. If you have any questions or clarifications you wish to raise after review of the AGM papers, I should be grateful if you would submit to the Secretary in advance of the meeting. This will facilitate its 'smooth' running.

**'37th
AGM'**

'Thank you'

I wish to take this opportunity to extend my SINCERE thanks to everyone for their support over the past eighteen months. Looking back makes me feel proud to have been given the opportunity to be the 36th Club President although somewhat disappointed that the term could not be concluded in the traditional way. There may have been some ups and downs since its formation in 1983 but nothing has affected the Club quite as much as this extraordinary and disruptive situation. However, we are a resourceful 'bunch', making use of and combining our individual skills and experience to ensure Probud aims and standards are maintained and we continue to stick together until we can meet again in the normal way.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish President elect Ian Dickson a successful time in office. He deserves the honour! His term will be the converse of mine, moving out of this unwanted 'state of affairs' through a 'new norm' and eventually back into the 'life and freedom we once had and enjoyed'.

**'Best
wishes'**

Remember, always, to stay safe and with very best wishes,

Michael Hamilton



EDITOR THOUGHTS – IAN DICKSON

Welcome to a shortened version of our Probud Newsletter.

For the moment this may be the last as we move into the next phase of our Probus programme. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed articles. I do hope you have enjoyed writing these stories, I do know Probus members have very much looked forward to reading our twice monthly newsletter during lockdown.

President Michael gave us input in the last newsletter with our planning for autumn meetings using Zoom, firstly an online AGM in mid September followed by regular speaker meetings. Rob Lester has been contacting several of the speakers who were on the original, pre Covid, programme to discuss with each whether they would be able to join us for a meeting checking also whether they were of the view their talk would be suitable for zoom. The feedback has been very encouraging so we are going to try this technology. The speaker programme is later in this newsletter. There is much to do, our first exercise is to check which members are current users of zoom, and then work with those who have not used the technology to get them up and running. We are meeting early this coming week to discuss how to manage this exercise and will be in touch to assess each members needs. This could be very interesting.

The AGM papers will be sent out to everyone this week. This is not the ideal way for holding this meeting, however in the current situation having an online meeting will be the best way to start our autumn Probus programme, to prepare members for online meetings and to allow President Mike to take a very well earned back seat after a very busy year. I do hope members agree this is the best and most pragmatic way forward this year.

There have been thoughts on how we format these online meetings to try and replicate our actual meetings. One suggestion is for the half hour before the start of the official meeting small groups, say up to 6 members, can have a smaller zoom meeting with coffee to match the social meetings which an important part of our regular Tuesday meetings. These smaller groups can either be organised by members themselves or it may be an opportunity for these groups to be a true member mix by creating random groups. Very interested in your member thoughts and feedback on how this idea may be managed.

Several members have again contributed articles to this edition which are much appreciated. The first comes from one of our newer members, Bill Millar, who talks about one of the old eastern bloc countries which is now a member of the EU. Next a short article from Bob Henry giving insight into the navy and rum. Finally an article from Willie Allan, again with a similar theme.

Again, many thanks to all who have contributed.

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SPEAKER PROGRAMME – ROB LESTER



6 th October	- David Potter	- `History of Dunfermline Athletic`
20 th October	- Iain McDonald	- `New Lanark`
3 rd November	- Tommy Bryson	- `Antique American Cars`
17 th November	- Mike Simpson	- `El Dorado and Other Legends`

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Sam Fairley
John Simons
George Goldie





BULGARIAN EXPERIENCE - BILL MILLAR

When we moved into our new house (second move) in Dalgety Bay, our new neighbours were Zhivko, a Bulgarian teacher, and his wife Diane. During one of our barbecue evenings Zhivko was a mine of information about Bulgaria. As we had always been interested in a holiday home and Zhivko told us how low the prices were compared to other countries (2003), we decided to take a holiday there to investigate.

Travelling to Bulgaria at that time meant flying from Heathrow to Sofia, then a twin turbo prop 56-seater to Varna, the Black Sea capital, which gave us a grand view of the country. We were pleasantly surprised at the price of property and started seriously looking for a house. After a few more trips we eventually bought a house in a village called Osonova, to which we added a lovely swimming pool and barbecue area. Our nearest neighbours were Peter, a retired army officer in the Bulgarian army, and his wife Dobrinka. The villagers were very open and friendly and a perfect example of living off the land. They grew their own fruit and vegetables and of course fresh chicken and goat's milk, plus home brewed 'rykia', a cross between brandy and wine and very potent!

There were no supermarkets at this time but very good corner shops and butchers. We were introduced gradually to our neighbour's family and spent some interesting days and evenings together, with a Bulgarian-English phrase book between us and of course much waving of the hands to describe events. However, their grandchildren were taught English in school so conversations were a lot better and gave us a firmer grasp of the Bulgarian language.

After retirement we decided to spend 4 or 5 months of the year at our house in Osonova, where we had a large black cherry tree in our garden as well as apricot, pear and apple trees.

Bulgaria was a complete contrast to resorts in Spain, Portugal, etc – no all day English breakfasts (yet!). It is a picturesque country with a very good education system, although there was a shortage of good jobs at that time. In restaurants you could be served by graduates with various university degrees and spoke very good English.

The most popular car at this time was the old Lada, a relic from the Russian occupation, and in very poor condition. When we left 10 years later, the Lada had given way to more upmarket cars and 4 x 4's, plus Bulgaria had joined the EU and the currency changed from the Lev to the Euro.

Flights were very inconsistent from Scotland so we decided to drive as we now had plenty of time on our hands. The journey of 2,500 miles took us through Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Romania. We had overnight stops in most of these countries, but not without a few scares. Whilst travelling through Romania, the automatic gearbox on our BMW X5 gave up the ghost. We were quite alarmed at this breakdown in Romania as the Bulgarians told us to be aware of the Romanians – "do not stop" they told us. However, the travel insurance came up tops and we spent 7 days in Sibiu, the capital of Transylvania. Sibiu was a very interesting city with Gothic architecture, Carpathian Mountains in the background and an incredible history with rumours of Count Dracula. The BMW garage managed to cut the repair cost by 50% as one of the mechanics knew someone who was specialised in repairing BMW gearboxes.

There were many more incidents on our travels, namely Romanian road signs causing confusion and nearly being jailed for refusing to pay a bribe at a border checkpoint.

In conclusion, from our first visit to this former communist occupied country to our departure, the change was dramatic – all day English breakfasts now! Since Bulgaria joined the EU, new motorways are being constructed, 4 x 4 cars have replaced the Lada and large holiday complexes and tourism has boomed. However, there is the presence of the Mafioso, hard to miss in their big flash autos.



RUM IN THE ROYAL NAVY OR NELSON'S BLOOD - BOB HENRY

Rum featured in the daily diet of the sailors going back to the days of sail. The daily ration was ½ a pint a day until 1836, this was necessary to make the food edible. It was in 1836 an Admiral who reduced the ration to ½ a gill a day, 1/8th of a pint.

The strength of the rum was 4.5 under proof, or 95.5 proof, strong stuff. The senior sailors received their ration neat whereas the junior sailors ration was diluted with two parts water, this was known as 2&1 or Grog. Why was it called Grog?

The Admiral who made this change in 1836 was called Admiral Vernon – the word Grog came from the type of cloak he wore known as a GROGRAM. He became known in the Navy as 'OLD GROG'.

There were a number of entitlements to drawing your daily rum.

1. Was G must be over 20 and borne on the ship's books.
2. Was T you could elect to be temperance – worth 3d a day
3. Was UA under the age on 20 – No Rum
4. Was NE not entitled – Officers, WRNS and those in receipt of Ration allowance - not on the books.

Rum was very much part of the social life in RN. It was like a currency, if a fellow shipmates did you a favour you would 'call him round' at tot time. There were three levels of gratitude – sippers, gulpers and sandy bottoms i.e. the whole tot.

The 30th July 1970 was the day of the last Rum Issue. Their Lordships withdrew the tot because of the Breathalyser test being introduced. Tests were carried out with the help of the police – after drinking a tot you would fail!!

The compensation for this 'drastic action' was Senior Ratings Mess's were allowed spirits and the juniors were given an increase in the amount of beer they could buy from the NAAFI.

The Rum tradition was not entirely lost. As some of you will know I spent my last 9 years of service in the Royal Yacht. After Royal Duty with the Queen and the Royal family we used to get a signal from the Palace – the final paragraph read 'SPICE THE MAIN BRACE' a tot of Rum was issued to all.



THE LOYAL TOAST – WILLIE ALLAN

Many are probably aware that the Royal Navy enjoys the unique privilege of remaining seated while drinking the Loyal Toast to the Sovereign. There are four possible origins of this cherished privilege.

One is that when, in 1660, Charles II was about to take passage back to this country from Holland in HMS Naseby, he bumped his head on the overhead deck beams when rising to reply to a toast.

Another theory is that William IV while Duke of Clarence, when dining on board a man of war, also bumped his head on a deck beam when he stood up.

Yet a third school of thought believes that when George IV while Prince Regent was dining on board a warship, he exclaimed as the officers rose to drink the Kings health, "Gentlemen, pray be seated. Your loyalty is above suspicion". Since the Prince Regent was continually at odds with his father over political matters, it is a matter of speculation as to which loyalty the Prince was referring: the King or himself!

It is true that in warships of the time it was practically impossible to stand upright between decks except right amidships and anyone seated close to the side, particularly with the “tumble home” of the ship’s side, would find it impossible to stand at all. Charles II might well have bumped his head, but that William IV might have done so is doubtful as he had been a sailor for years and was well used to the inboard shape of ships. Indeed, while a serving naval officer in the West Indies, he had acted as best man at the wedding of Captain Horatio Nelson, then commanding the frigate Boreas, to the attractive widow, Mrs Nesbit.

The fourth theory is that the custom originated in the Restoration Navy in the 1660s, among gentleman volunteers, who formed the first considerable mess on board ship before the Wardroom Mess existed. Not being seamen by upbringing, they are likely to have found it difficult to keep their feet in a seaway.

In 1964, on the occasion of the Tercentenary of the Corps, the privilege of drinking the Loyal Toast seated was extended by Queen Elizabeth II to officers and NCOs of the Royal Marines and in 1966 Her Majesty further extended the privilege to Chief and Petty Officers of the Royal Navy.

Whatever the truth of the origin of the custom, it goes by the board if the National Anthem is played prior to the toast if the Queen, Duke of Edinburgh or any other member of the Royal Family is present unless the Royal Personage has expressed the wish that they should remain seated.

The second exception is if a foreign naval officer is present, as custom is that the health of the foreign head of state is toasted first, for which all present stand, following which, to avoid embarrassment to the foreign visitor, the Loyal Toast is also drunk standing.

On the matter of loyalty, there is a general belief that Naval Officers have to carry their scabbarded swords rather than wear them on their belts like the Army due to having upset some Sovereign in the past and been ordered to do this as consequential punishment. The true origin of this custom is much more pragmatic. If worn on the belt, swords would be major encumbrances to officers embarked in ship’s boats.

VOTE OF THANKS – TOM WATT

I had no idea when I retired in December 1995 and came home to live in Dalgety Bay that life would be so varied and different.

It started with an invitation from my friend Len Sneddon to join Probus and so began a new chapter. I was surprised and slightly in awe of the depth of experience to be found in Dalgety Bay Probus even if much smaller in those days.

Jim Morris Air Vice Marshal defending the Empire, John Simons thief catcher par excellence, Len Sneddon raconteur and pianist of repute and in another way Ron Colman Golf supremo. These are but a few friends made over the years.

Then the speakers ranging from the mundane to the fascinating but all willing to give of their time and experience to educate or entertain. So it goes on.

To all of them and to every member my vote of thanks to speaker and hearer alike.