

Portland Probus Club Website Articles Archive – 2019/2020

Thursday 7 March 2019 - Portland Probus Club AGM

Forty six members attended the eleventh AGM of Portland Probus Club. As usual we all enjoyed a coffee and pre meeting chat.

Ken, our President, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, especially new members.

Each committee member gave their annual report which helped members to reflect on the work done by the committee. This reminded us of all the excellent talks and interim events we have enjoyed during the year.

Ken then spoke about his year as President which he said he had found satisfying and very enjoyable. He then presented "The Egg" to Joyce Scott who had organised the very popular "Truth and Lies" event.

The new committee were duly elected and Rob, our new President presented Ken with his past Presidents pin and in return Ken presented Rob with his new elf outfit!

Rob then spoke of his hopes for the coming year and reiterated his encouragement to all members to consider how they might contribute to the activities of the club.

The old committee were thanked and now we all look forward to another enjoyable year as members of Portland Probus Club.

(by Carol Lambkin)

Thursday 21 March 2019 - Visit to Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS), Yeovilton, Somerset

Sixteen members and three guests arrived at the Fleet Air Arm Museum carpark at a very early 0900 and damp morning. Our group were greeted by Lt Cdr Duncan Dart who was our host for this visit. We all boarded the Military Transport (MT) bus, receiving the first of at least three safety briefs and headed the short distance to the Historic Flight (HF) Museum on base for the start of our tour.

The curator of the HF, Kate, gave a comprehensive and very enthusiastic talk on the Swordfish, Sea Fury, Wasp and Sea Vixen. She explained in great detail the roll these aircraft played, their construction and the ongoing work to keep these aircraft flying in the memory of those who did fly and maintain these aircraft in conflicts and in the protection of our Country. Kate explained that it will cost £2M to rebuild the only flyable Sea Vixen which unfortunately crash landed at Yeovilton on the 17th May 2017. Work cannot start in earnest until the funds have been raised through charitable donation. Our Club was able to go some way towards this by donating £105 plus a further £85 as those attending did not think that I charged enough for this event. Therefore, in total we were able to gift £190 which was well received by Kate.

After a short break and coffee, it was back onto the MT which took us to 845 Merlin Mk4 Squadron hanger where Duncan gave a talk on the roll of the Merlin MK4 and his experiences of flying this aircraft in conflict zones and in training. We were able to board the aircraft in small groups and see the flight deck and state of the art flight touch screen displays which Duncan was able to light up and talk us through their functions. One of our group noted the sheep skin seat covers for the pilot, Duncan explained you can be sat down for a very long time!

At mid-day we left the base on our MT and arrived back at the Fleet Air Arm Museum café for lunch and the normal catch up chat. A great day enjoyed by all.

(Graham Gardiner)

Thursday 4 April 2019 - Talk by Robin Cooke on My Life and Times at Harrods

Staggering! It really does not seem that twelve months have passed since I was reporting the last first meeting, but yes he we are again, entering a new Portland Probus Club year and a new President.

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Staggering! It really does not seem that twelve months have passed since I was reporting the last first meeting, but yes we are again, entering a new Portland Probus Club year and a new President.

As expected our new President, Rob Coward, ensured that his first meeting commenced more or less dot on 11.30 a.m. Rob welcomed a large number of members on what was a wet, windy and dreary day. Rob thanked Graham for organising a splendid interim visit to Yeovilton. He then made no apology for asking members to consider the possibility of joining the management committee.

Jim reminded the club that he is our club's liaison officer. In this role he principally liaises with the hotel in respect of our meetings and deals with any issues such as meals and inadequate facilities. Jim requested that any complaints, concerns or compliments members have should be mentioned to him so that he takes the necessary action with the appropriate person in the hotel.

Rob then introduced our speaker Robin who spent the next hour giving us his talk on working in Harrods in the late 50s' early 60s. When he asked "Has everybody present been into Harrods?" we all had. Robin finds when giving this talk often this is not the case.

Robin gave us some fascinating facts about Harrods that started life as a tea purchaser and grocer in the East End in 1834. The present property occupies 4.5 acres, has 1 million metres of selling space, can have over 100,000 potential customers in a day, uses 12000 light bulbs for outside illuminations and had 5000 employees.

In 1960 to compete with Carnaby Street Harrods opened "The Way In" boutique on the 4th floor opened by Tony Blackburn. Harrods was the first store to introduce moving staircases in 1898.

I am sure memories came flooding back to most of us of the way we used to shop in pre internet days. Robin who was in fact the youngest Buyer at 26 years old illustrated many of these including the strict staff dress code expected.

All in all it was a fascinating and enjoyable talk to listen to. Robin did say that there is a part 2 and I am sure that members would probably welcome this at a future meeting. Thank you Robin for giving us today's talk and for your personal insight in what working was like in the 1950s and 1960s.

(by Mike Duthoit)

Thursday 18 April 2019 - Visit to Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum

As I was arriving at the Shire Hall Museum at 10.15 a.m. the first group of 17 people were just about to start their museum tour, having had their refreshments.

The second group duly mustered in a room designated in 1956 as the Dorset County Council chamber for tea and coffee. Our volunteer museum guide this morning was none other than our own Ken who, I have to say bubbled over in his desire to give us as much information as possible during our visit.

Ken started off by telling us of the history of the buildings, one Georgian, built between 1795/7 for Assizes and Quarter Sessions. He also issued us with multimedia machines on which we would be able to follow one of four cases – Tolpuddle Martyrs, Elizah Upjohn, Daniel Upjohn or Martha Brown as we walked around.

Since my last visit some 10 years plus ago I was amazed at the transformation of this important historic attraction but, the £3m plus to convert it to its present condition has been well carried out and the blend of the use of modern technology with the reality of seeing rooms and cells as they were has been very tastefully done.

When we went in the small individual holding cells built in 1880 to replace communal cells, they were clean and hygienic but, back in the day they undoubtedly would have been cold, dark and smelly. We visited the cell where the Tolpuddle Martyrs were held, the Grand Jury room and the Court. Interestingly secondary glazing was fitted to the large windows in the Court room in 1880, not to keep warmth in but, to keep noise out. Our secretary David donned Judges Raiment together with wig and dispensed a few words of wisdom.

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The conclusion of the visit was to see the work of Jason Wilsher-Mills on the Tolpuddle Martyrs using IPADS – quite unusual but fascinating.

Ken comprehensively covered the social history of our country from King George 111 through to Queen Victoria in great detail and certainly made the whole visit interesting and informative. I just hope that the first group had a similar experience with their guide.

As you know on such visits I like to report quirky things. Today I was intrigued to learn that when Queen Victoria visited Dorset if her itinerary involved going through a village or river with Piddle in the name it was changed to Puddle! The Shire Hall had a nuclear bunker facility which Ken said would not have worked. 'Pigtails' were the chains used to open cells doors, just like those now used on our doors to see to see who is outside. Finally do you know what a Phrenologist studies? I do.

Ken said there is another tour 'Behind the scenes' which explores the history of the building. Thank you Ken, for organising this event and for carrying out guide duties. Super job.

(by Mike Duthoit)

Thursday 2 May 2019 - Talk by Ralph Jerram on The Pun is Mightier than the Sword

Although our Probus club has been in existence for over 10 years I am surprised that I can still regularly report 'club firsts'. Today I think I am correct in reporting two new occurrences.

The first, first, (gosh I have not seen that in writing before), was caused by President Rob. Why? Well Rob was wearing a suit – yes he was. I have been at many meetings with Rob for well over 20 years and although he is always smartly turned out I cannot remember the last time I saw Rob in a suit. Luckily Rob did not put out a decree that from now on male members must wear suits at meetings.

Rob timed to the second the announcements made by club members on various issues. This came to 6 minutes 29 seconds and as it happened ultimately resulted in us being able to go to lunch earlier!

The second first was Ralph our speaker. Ralph is a member of Gillingham Probus Club and whilst our own members address the club from time to time, I do not recall a member from another Probus club speaking to us.

Ralph now retired, who has had a triple heart by pass worked in Human Resources in the Oil and Gas industry and also London Transport Police. Ralph had a fantastic collection of puns on a wide variety of subjects which came to us non-stop. At various points in his presentation he actually burst into song (does this constitute a third first?).

I suppose that many of us had heard the puns Ralph told us but nevertheless, the way he told them kept a lot of us laughing no-stop throughout the presentation. Ralph made several references to puns used by the likes of Shakespeare, Shelley, Oscar Wilde and Thomas Hardy.

As Ian Thom said in his vote of thanks to Ralph he cannot remember hearing a stand up comedian before mid-day. We certainly went into lunch in a happy frame of mind.

Thank you Ralph for the amusing presentation this morning and Rob S for making the arrangements.

Can I thank in advance Alan N for covering the reporting of the Nothe Fort visit in my absence and similarly Ann A for doing the honours at our next meeting on June 6.

(By Mike Duthoit)

Thursday 16 May 2019 - Visit to Nothe Forte, Weymouth

The muster was at 10.15 and there we all were ready, if not for battle, then for coffee and a guided tour .

The fort had been built in the second half of the 19th century, primarily to keep the French out. Now of course we welcome them and others, especially on cruise ships! The fort commands the whole sweep

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of Weymouth Bay & Portland Harbour and from the ramparts the view is stunning and without moving much more than one's eyes takes in the back of M&S, the Statue, Pier bandstand and on to the White Horse and St Alban's Head and across Weymouth Bay to the whole of the north & west faces of Portland, along the beach road to Bincleaves and Newton's Cove.

Built in the 1860s in the twilight days of sail, the fort was finally decommissioned as a military base in the 1950s and seems to have what might be a unique distinction in that it never had to fire a shot in anger. Its mere presence seems to have been an adequate deterrent during the Victorian era and throughout WW1 & WW2 to act as a protective shield for the many ships sheltering in Portland Harbour.

Our guides showed us all three levels in the fort. From the powder and munitions rooms deep in the bowels of the massive Portland stone clad walls (said to be 40/50 foot thick in places) to the gun deck with huge guns capable of firing 12.5 inch shells and up to the parade ground with its 2foot diameter mobile searchlight. And up on the ramparts, the anti aircraft guns.

There were various military displays giving a glimpse of warfare right back to Roman times. From WW1 we saw the awfulness of the trenches and learnt some of the awe inspiring statistics - 36.3 million dead in four years ! And the enlistment of 1 million horses! I doubt there are that many horses in existence today.

In one of the rooms was a quiet tribute to Jack Mantle awarded the Victoria Cross in 1940 defending his ship, HMS Foylebank, in Portland Harbour during which he lost his life.

And of course lots of pictures and superb models of the build up to D-Day and models too of the arrivals on the beaches of Normandy.

After the military decommissioned the fort in 1956, it was taken on by the local council who unsurprisingly didn't know quite what to do with it. Neglect and vandalism soon took its toll and over the years it became derelict and indeed dangerous.

Weymouth Civic Society, then in its infancy, stepped in and offered to run it as a visitor centre and to maintain and preserve it - and what a magnificent job they have done over the last forty years.

From an absolute wreck, the Civic Society have restored it and made it the great attraction it is now. Visitor numbers are now counted in the tens of thousands, both local and tourists. All its volunteers are to be congratulated and indeed thanked for turning what was once a disgraceful blot on our local landscape into the attraction we can all be proud of.

Those members unable to go missed a real treat. Those who did go had a great morning and a lovely lunch for which we thank our trip organisers, Graham Gardiner and Lis Francis most sincerely.

(by Alan Newberry)

Thursday 6 June 2019 - Talk by Sue Hennessey on Antarctica 2017

Those of us who had heard all or some of the previous talks from Sue were really looking forward to this one as we filed into the meeting room on a sunny June morning. We were not disappointed !

We learnt that Antarctica is the 5th largest continent (twice the size of Australia). It is the coldest, driest, windiest and highest of all the continents. 98 percent is covered in ice, which is 2.5 miles thick. 90 percent to the world's fresh water is in the ice. Were it to melt water levels would rise by 200 feet (a very sobering thought).

We then accompanied Sue on the voyage. Hoping to land on Cape Horn but weather was against them so a circumnavigation of the Cape, which is a island. Two days through Drake Straits (also known as Shaky Straits), then arrival at The Antarctic peninsula, which they explored, going ashore in Ribs and meeting penguins, seeing hump backed whales and skuas. The only plants were mosses and lichens and a small clump of grass.

They saw some of the research stations which are set in the remotest places. The conditions the scientists live in are pretty basic. They actually visited a British station which is now a museum.

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Sue also explained about the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 to which 52 countries are signatories. The Treaty is to protect the unique Eco systems of the continent. There are stringent conditions to which all visitors are subject. Being hoovered down on arrival and each time they went ashore to prevent contamination being just one aspect.

A mixture of facts, anecdotes, vivid descriptions and wonderful photography, coupled with Sue's lively humour and her expression of the awe she felt at the surroundings, made this a special talk. I think we all got a real feeling of what it was like to be there. Thank you Sue.

(by Ann Ashworth)

Tuesday 20 June 2019 - Motor Vessel (MV) Freedom Boat Trip out of Weymouth Harbour

We can count ourselves lucky that on the day, 20 members attending this event organised by Wendy had been blessed with weather conditions to enable our group to take to the sea on MV Freedom.

Unfortunately, the lunch arrangement at the Kings Arms had to be changed due to the venue closing without notification. At very short notice Wendy arranged lunch at the Library café and I think this proved to be successful given the size of the tea cakes!

I write this as an afternoon sailor but I'm sure the morning sailing was just as enjoyable. Before sailing, a safety brief was given by the crew and then we all struggled into our life jackets.

We set sail at 14:00 and headed out of Weymouth harbour into the bay before taking a starboard turn towards the north entrance to Portland harbour. At this point David Geary was at the helm, being closely supervised by the skipper.

MV Freedom made its way towards the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) vessel Wave Knight tied up alongside at Portland Port. We then made a heading in towards the Mulberry harbour structures left over from the D-Day landings 75 years ago. It was fascinating to be so close to these massive structures as we sailed around them noting the statue figures depicting British and American troops as well as dockyard workers atop placed there by the D-Day Museum in Castletown.

On our way out of the harbour we witnessed a pair of team GB yachts practicing turns with great athleticism around buoys placed 50 metres apart.

As we headed out into Weymouth bay eventually turning into a south westerly direction towards Weymouth harbour the wind picked up forcing some of us into the cabin although those hardy members remained seated at the stern.

Alongside at her berth at 16:15, a great afternoon as I am sure the morning sailing will agree, so it is a big thank you to Wendy for organising this brilliant Portland Probus event.

(By Graham Gardiner)

Thursday 4 July 2019 - Talk by Mike Colbourne on Monkey World

It is always nice when the president opens the meeting by inducting a new member into our club. President Rob had that pleasure today with Jane Hall joining us. We look forward to seeing and getting to know Jane better at our meetings and events. We sincerely hope that she obtains much pleasure and enjoyment as a member.

Various committee members gave us updates about events, news of members suffering with medical ailments and sadly the passing of Vic. Wells.

How lucky we were that Mike Colbourne was able to step in as our speaker. We really could not have had such an enthusiastic, emotional, humorous and knowledgeable person to speak to us on Monkey World.

Mike has been working with primates for something in excess of 50 years with 6.5 years at Chester Zoo, 27.5 years at Bristol Zoo and then 20 years at Monkey World. He certainly used this vast

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experience to maximum effect with some wonderful examples and tales of things his work has involved.

Mike started by telling that Monkey World opened in 1987 with the aim of stopping and rescuing chimpanzees, on a 65 acre site near Wareham, from the horrific steps that went into obtaining chimpanzees in Spain for photographs with holiday makers.

There are now over 250 animals at Monkey World which have come from a variety of sources including closed zoos and discarded pets. Monkey World has also helped 27 governments stop the black market in monkeys. Mike had some photographs with him but, I do suggest looking at the Monkey World website where there are many more.

Monkey World is the largest rescue centre in the world. It is proud of being the only breeder of woolly monkeys, a critically endangered monkey.

All monkeys arriving at Monkey World undergo a health check. They are lucky in having a Harley Street dentist to look at teeth.

Mike told us that an adjoining 151 acres have been purchased next door to the existing site with a property which can be used for weddings and as an educational centre.

To conclude what was a really excellent talk, even for those not particularly interested in monkeys, Mike managed to get Rob to pretend to be newly arrived chimpanzee (stop it!) with a view to demonstrating how a monkey can be trained. Mike does many talks and apparently Rob was first class at obeying commands given (I know unbelievable but, others as well as me can bear witness).

Mike thank you very much for entertaining as well as educating us so well. Apart from anything else the hour plus that you were speaking certainly flew past.

(By Mike Duthoit)

Thursday 18 July 2019 - Abbey House Lunch

As on many occasions before, Mary and Andy organised not only a superb lunch but also wonderful weather.

Thank you so much Mary and Andy and also many thanks to Abbey House for such excellent food and service.

(By Webmaster)

Monday 29th July 2019 - Portland Probus Club Committee Meeting

A new look, and a new experience! This is what happened to the 8 out of 10 members of the management team of our probus club who met this morning.

We were greeted by our secretary David at his house and after an inspection of his (well Sue's really) garden which was ablaze with a wonderful display of colourful flowers, directed to an area outside his back door.

David had set up tables and chairs so we could hold our planned committee meeting alfresco (I think the club's first committee meeting held in the fresh air?).

Although these meetings are scheduled to start at 10.00 a.m. sharp and nearly always do so, being outside tended to throw members off for some reason and we were later starting this morning. Maybe it was because we took too long over coffee and chocolate biscuits! As it happened the agenda did not contain any big or problematic issues so the late start was not crucial.

President Rob received reports from chairmen, chairwomen and chair people. (Politically correct and do not want to offend anybody) Quite often these reports can be interspersed with amusing quips and a wandering off the subject, today for example we managed to get onto seagulls snatching dogs, and I am not sure how this occurred.

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As Andy said “In the 9 /10 years I have been on this committee I have always found it fun, enjoyable and a very social occasion”. How many could say that about attending committee meetings? I have not served on the committee as long as Andy but, agree with his sentiments

Okay what was discussed? Well we talked about memberships, numbers in the club (You know what I mean!) amongst other items. Rob did mention By- laws and the Constitution at one stage but, I think I switched off for this section of the meeting.

The aim is to restrict the 6 meetings we hold a year to an absolute maximum of 2 hours but, today we finished at 11.20.a.m. or thereabouts.

Our President mentions at our monthly meetings the need for new members to join our Probud Club committee. You are probably thinking no that is not for me as; it will be fussy, stuffy and regimented. You would be wrong on all counts. In addition you would be able to influence what the club does and get you views across and heard.

Please do consider taking on a role, none are too onerous especially as a new look committee would enable further new experiences to occur.

P.S. We need a new Treasurer for the next Probud year – how about you?

(By Mike Duthoit)

Thursday 18 July 2019 - Talk by In-house Speaker Sarah Studley on Life on a Working Farm

It was extremely impressive that three quarters of club members came to hear our in house speaker. This should not have been a surprise as I have found that some of the best and most interesting speakers have come from our own club members. Sarah certainly continued this tradition.

In true Naval fashion President Rob opened the meeting spot on time but, not before there was a minor panic through there not being sufficient chairs! Rob thanked Andy for organising another luncheon at Abbey House. How Andy manages to book splendid weather year after year is a real wonder. Unfortunately Rob had to mention the vacancies which will occur on the committee in the coming years and sought volunteers to fill vacant posts. Other committee members then gave meeting updates on forthcoming activities and speakers.

On arriving this morning I was walking up the stairs just behind Sarah and President Rob and overheard Sarah saying how nervous she was feeling about speaking. Well, it is certainly did not show as Sarah talked to us for a good hour without any notes or visual aids in an amusing and absorbing way.

If nothing else I am glad that farming did not come within a million miles of being a career choice. Who would want to work 80 hour weeks, 365 days a year, be out in all weathers, suffer costs and variable or no income, and be affected by your stock becoming ill and many other disasters and events mostly beyond your control. Sarah did and would not have changed it although admitted it has taken its toll on her body.

Sarah recalled how she trained as a nanny and then met her husband Pedro a fisherman! She told us how they started on a 100 acre farm in partnership initially owning 2 cows Mandy and Christine. Yes, all her cows were given names. Over a period of time the number of cows rose to 40, to 60, then 80 and when they joined forces with a neighbouring farm and had a greater acreage, 220 cows. Over time the farm had a bout of brucellosis, suffered milk quotas, butter mountains and Sarah suffered from pneumonia herself. She is proud that her son introduced the New Zealand system into milking and calving, the first to do so in the country and which made life slightly easier.

Over the years Sarah and Pedro experimented with various initiatives such as raising sheep, growing maize, growing potatoes, going organic, and raising heifers. Sarah not one to stand still is now in the process of overseeing the completion of holiday cottages and involved with a charity involving young people and horses.

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In addition to everything else Sarah is an artist, keen gardener and has also playing badminton and squash. Wow!

Wendy thanked Sarah who, she has known for over 45 years, for a super presentation to which I and everybody else I am sure wholeheartedly agrees.

(By Mike Duthoit)

Thursday 15 August 2019 - Visit to Kingston Maurward for Garden Tour and Picnic

After a wet start to the day, 18 members enjoyed an excellent visit to Kingston Maurward in beautiful sunshine. After the usual coffee as befits all visits, we were treated to a guided tour of the gardens by head gardener Nigel. He gave us a brief history of the house and explained how the last owners of the house, the Hanburys, developed the gardens that we saw today. Their vision was gardens divide into "rooms", of which, two were defined by colour, the Red Garden and the Rainbow Garden. There was the Crown Garden, the Herbaceous Border as well as the Japanese Garden. From our expert, we were interested to learn about a large collection of penstemons growing on the Penstemon Terrace and where the best place is to grow them in our own gardens.

We moved across the parkland with its beautiful established trees down to the lake and on down the oak walk, past the Grecian Temple to the Elizabethan Manor House and beyond to the Walled Garden. Originally this was the kitchen garden for both houses and now it is a valuable resource as a teaching garden. Here the students at the college learn about flowers and plants, learning how to look after them and the names of the wide variety that grow there whilst maintaining the garden. Our final visit on the tour was to see the enormous green houses, probably the most valuable resource for the students where they look after tender plants in the winter and propagate new plants. In a very suitable position, on the same site one large green house acts as a classroom. I am sure everyone found Nigel's talk as fascinating as I did and thank him for his time and for imparting lots of knowledge.

We were joined by Lucy and Chris and Rob (with dog) for our convivial picnic lunch in an idyllic setting above the lake on the terrace in front of Kingston Maurward House. Finally thanks to Judith for arranging such a well organized event.

(By Margaret Chapman)

Thursday 5 September 2019 - Talk by Bill Coombes on The International Space Station (ISS)

Well that was different! I must admit I was apprehensive before the meeting as I presumed that this talk would feature technical aspects and perhaps leave me a little bemused and not a lot knowledgeable – how wrong I was.

Whilst drinking coffee before the meeting I looked around and quickly assessed that there was a good attendance today – at a quick count I put it at 50+. Jolly good but not surprising with the school holidays ended and grandchild minding and visitors descending for a stay at the seaside finished.

As usual President Rob and other committee members brought members up to date on events and other matters of interest, before our speaker was introduced.

Our speaker Bill Coombes, started his talk by showing us on his computer that the International Space Station, (ISS), was flying over Australia. Bill then proceeded to give us an informative but very easily understood set of facts and figures about the ISS.

What is usually in many peoples minds is how the basics of life are dealt on the ISS especially eating and going to the loo. These did not have to be explained as we were shown a short 10 minute video featuring Sally Williams, an astronaut, who showed us the food larder, and demonstrated how the toilet facilities worked, how to brush teeth, comb your hair and then where the astronauts' slept. She also demonstrated on video weightlessness.

Bill then explained that there were 3 main dangers. These were fire, food supplies and the devastating impact debris can have in space. Some interesting and unusual experiments and trials are constantly being carried out some, just in order to ensure that the astronauts' do not become bored! Zinnia flowers and lettuce are grown.

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All the latest Cannon and Nikon cameras are sent up to the ISS to be trialled. Bill certainly had some terrific photographs taken from the Cupola which Bill likened to a greenhouse where the glass is 28mm (1 1/8") thick, which were stunning and covered a wide range of differing topics including volcanoes, mountains, rivers, big cities and individual monuments like the Egyptian pyramids

I learnt many interesting facts such as, Velco is one of the most useful items, the ISS never goes over the poles, 14 countries involved with working and financing the ISS.

The ISS weighs 37600kgs, (414 tons), 390 astronauts have been to ISS since 2000, the ISS travels at 17500 mph at 250 miles above the earth and is powered almost solely by solar. It circles the earth in roughly 92 minutes' if fully staffed there are 6 astronauts on ISS.

Thank you very much indeed Bill for giving us such a super talk. I understand that this is one of 18 talks that you deliver and I certainly hope that it will not be too long before you are invited back to address us again.

(By Mike Duthoit)

Thursday 19 September 2019 - Visit to Martyrs Museum at Tolpuddle

When we arrived at the Martyrs Museum, Tolpuddle, I was surprised that Mo and I were the first to arrive – something we are not noted for. After nearly 10 minutes and still the only ones it twigged we should be at the Martyrs Inn – plonkers.

The upside of this error was that it gave us an extra walk through what is a delightful and extremely attractive village. The downside was that there was little coffee left when we met up with the other 25+ people on this visit.

Our group sauntered back up the road to the museum where we were met by Tom who manages the museum and estate. We all stood outside in glorious sunshine, looking over countryside in all its glory, whilst Tom spent an hour giving us a very detailed and comprehensive background talk on the economic and political history leading up to six martyrs' story, Union and TUC connections. I felt this visit was a welcome continuation of the visit that we made to the Historic Courthouse Museum in Dorchester earlier this year.

The Martyrs Museum is small and could only just accommodate our group. The story and history of the martyrs is well told mostly by printing on hanging banners. There is some commemorative memorabilia on view.

It was interesting to learn that the row of cottages in which the museum is centrally situated was built on behalf of the TUC in 1933 to house agricultural workers. These properties were the first to have electricity in the village. As an aside whilst we were listening to Tom we were slightly distracted by probably 100 or more house martins who were there one minute and gone the next but nobody saw them fly off.

We strolled over to the church graveyard to view the grave stone of James Hammett, the only martyr to return and live in Dorset. This grave stone was designed and carved by Eric Gill who amongst other things carried out work on the BBC's Broadcast House. Ken kindly told us more about James Hammett.

On going to the smallest village green in England, Ken showed us the 320 year old sycamore tree and its much more recent sibling. This old tree has been designated 1 of 50 Great British Trees. All this knowledge and learning makes one thirsty and hungry so we quickly made our way back to the Martyrs Inn for what turned out to be a very enjoyable and filling late lunch.

Thank you very much too Graham and Pat for organising a splendid outing to the Martyrs Museum, the talk by Tom, and Tolpuddle in general, as well as making the arrangements for lunch at the Martyrs Inn pub.

(By Mike Duthoit)

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