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Mobile 07780 901696

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Newsletter - Issue 07 - 2011 - July

Editor's Notes by Peter Smith

Following the recent Opt Out letter it has been suggested by a couple of club members that it might be a good idea to produce the letter in an e-mail format. Unfortunately for logistical reasons this is not possible at the moment but we will investigate the possibility for the future.

The judge's decision has been made. Thank you to all those who entered our short story competition, we sent all the entries to Michael Legat, a previous guest speaker at one of our events, who in a previous life was a well known and respected book publisher. This enabled us to obtain not only an unbiased decision but a short critique of every entry, all of which have been sent to the entrants.

Michael's overall comments were *"I should like to congratulate all the entrants. The short story is a much more difficult form of writing than is generally realized and limiting its length to 500 words makes it even harder, so the fact that none of the entries is without merit - and I enjoyed reading them all - is commendable."*

Congratulations to Sue Shaw for her entry which took second place. The winner is published in this month's Newsletter and the second next month, we hope you enjoy them. All the entries will be on the website.

Chairman's Report by Chris Belton



Football - I am pleased to report that five lucky Retirees and their guests will be going to the opening ceremony at the new American Express Community Stadium at the end of the month. We were given the tickets courtesy of American Express and they were advertised on the website, due to time restraints. I realise that there is a huge demand for Retirees to get tickets, discounts and other concessions but time was very short. I will continue to keep in contact with American Express to see what else we might be able to get!!

Email addresses - Over the years I have collected many hundreds of email addresses from Retirees. I have made use of them only sparingly because I think that's the right approach. However in trying to offer tickets for the Stadium's opening ceremony as well as getting names for the Stadium tour recently, it has uncovered the need for a bit of an update! If you have changed your email address over the last couple of years and / or you would like me to have your email address for future use, then please let me know. Just email me using the Subject as "Retiree email update" and I'll take care of things at my end. Including your mailing address would also be helpful, but optional.

Preston Manor September 22nd - The "Behind the scenes tour" is almost full up - we have just two places left. The cost is £10.50 per person. If you would like to come along then please let me know. Cheques payable to American Express Retirees Club please and sent to my home address.

Make a contribution - It would be good to hear from more of you about what's happening to you, or in your area, or where you've been visiting. Anything at all in fact. Don't think "it won't be interesting". Just write a couple of paragraphs and send it to Peter or me.

Future Events



Inns and Taverns of Old Arundel - 21st July - Our last talk before our August break, so come along and hear anecdotal tales of the past inhabitants of Arundel. An ancient town on the banks of the River Arun just a short way from the south Sussex coastal areas, an area that abounded with inns and taverns that provided work, entertainment and no doubt places to hide from the Revenue Men in years long gone.

Our speaker is Rupert Brooks a local man, a retired Chartered Mechanical Engineer, who has spent time researching the subject in the archives of Arundel Castle, the West Sussex Records Office and talking to numerous long standing local residents. With his knowledge it should prove a fascinating subject.



HMP Prison Lewes - 1st September - I know it's a way off but please try to support this event. We are very lucky and honoured to have the Governor of Lewes prison Robin Eldridge to talk to us about the prison, its aims, restrictions and general administration. We all have our views on what prison life should be so this is an opportunity to find out the truth and ask a few questions along the way.

Event Reports

Brighton Football Club Stadium Tour - June 9th - With only a few days notice it was a bit of a rush to get this organized, a hasty e-mail to those club members on our list with the first 5 couples responding being chosen. What we thought would be difficult was actually settled within an hour or two. Sorry to anyone who missed out on this occasion but there will be other opportunities.

It turned out we were even more privileged than expected being the first group ever to tour the new stadium, a new home to Brighton and Hove Albion FC, they were "handed the keys" in early June. Not even the Brighton team players have seen it yet. The new stadium is called the American Express Community Stadium so along with six Amex employees we made a group of sixteen plus three guides; one was an interpreter for our Amex colleagues.



Arriving at the early hour of 9.15am (*well for retirees at least*) the retiree group donned their reflective jackets; the area is still being worked on so this was a Health and Safety requirement. After a brief walk from the on-site car park we made our way into the new stadium's reception area and up to a meeting room to wait for the remainder of the tour group to meet up with us. We were surprised by the extensive banks of desks involved in selling the clubs tickets and events, I suppose we hadn't realized how much behind the scenes work goes on to run a club.

Our tour commenced with a visit to the supporters shop and then to the supporters club room and on through the main reception areas, much of it still remains bare as it still requires the internal furnishing but it was still very impressive. Then the main highlight a brief walk through to the east corner of the stadium to view the playing area up close. A vast expanse of green very flat grass that didn't appear to be real (actually some isn't as the extreme edges are artificial but who's complaining). The pitch is being continually watered mowed and rolled to provide one of the best and largest playing surfaces available.

Upstairs then to the "posh" stands, there are numerous meeting and banqueting rooms on the second and third floors, it seems football clubs don't survive just by playing football, commercial enterprise is an important source of income. There already a number of wedding receptions booked.

A visit then to Directors viewing boxes, a number of retirees sat in the chairs as it was probably their one and only chance of doing so, which like all the seats in stadium have excellent uninterrupted views of the pitch. We were then allowed outside on to the upper terraces, some seats are very high up on the tiers and take a bit of a climb to get to them but they do provide a terrific view of the whole of the interior of the stadium and the pitch.

Then the exciting bit, a visit to the players changing rooms and the players tunnel on to the pitch, these were a long way down from the upper terraces down what seemed like interminable flights of stairs, only a few lucky ones got to go in the lifts. Although not finished with benches and lockers etc. we could still imagine how things would look and work. Nearly at the end we visited the offices including the manager's office and "private area" together with the gymnasium and warm up areas.

Our tour at the end we all made our way home feeling very honoured to have had the opportunity to visit a place which all of us hope will become a very important and successful part of our Sussex area.

The club passes on our thanks to the organizers and guides particularly Laura who patiently escorted us around the stadium and answered all our questions. Photos on the website www.theretirees.co.uk

Petanque - June 9th - I had completely missed Peter's instruction to bring along a clothes peg! I guess I couldn't understand why I'd need one to play a ball game - but then you know me and sport!!



All would be revealed though as a group of us entered the playing area in Hove and out came the peg to draw a circle in the gravel into which each of us stood in order to play. The rules were quite simple. Throw a little ball about 6 - 10 metres in front of you and then throw a larger ball towards it. Individuals or teams of two or three compete against each other and the winning team is the one with the most balls closer to the small one. I got a bit confused by the order of play but it didn't seem to matter as we were guided by both Peter and a couple of members from his club who had come along to help out.

So, let's get a bit more specific. The little ball is called a cochonnet which I understand means little pig - don't ask! The larger ball is a boule. Petanque means feet together as that is how the players must stand - in their little circle. The playing area is a piste. The game is generally played on gravel but any hard surface will do - as long, I suppose as you can draw the circle!! As Peter pointed out the game requires no real strength, no expensive equipment and can be played virtually anywhere. This makes it an ideal game to be played by almost anyone.

Simple? Not exactly, this was clearly demonstrated on several occasions by Retirees!! The surface was uneven, unlike bowls. This makes the boule do all sorts of unexpected things giving the game a bit of excitement and uncertainty. There's clearly a knack in getting the boule near the cochonnet with underhand throwing adding some back spin.

As the piste is located on the seafront it drew interested spectators who, until they saw us, were quietly minding their own business. This added to the overall excitement of the competition - as they, like us, had no idea of what was going on!!

To be fair, it was another good example of a Retiree event - doing something you wouldn't otherwise have done. For me it falls into the category of "do something different every day". A good time was had by all even if it was a little breezy!! If anyone is interested in finding out more or where your nearest club is then visit the website: www.englishpetanque.org.uk.

Photographs of this event can be found on the website www.theretirees.co.uk

Short Story - 1st Place



Penalty - There was a loud roar from the crowd as I chipped the ball past and ran into the penalty box, the noise increased as I fell, tripped by the defender. A deathly quiet spread across the crowd as the Referee ran over to consult the linesman with just a few minutes to go to the end of the match and the score at 0-0. To some in the stadium it was clear cut to others on the opposition it was not. Suddenly the crowd erupted as the official pointed to the penalty spot.

PENALTY! The crowd roared.

This was my big moment.

Ever since I was a young boy I always wanted to be a footballer, I saw my first match when only about six or seven and was immediately captivated by the colours, sounds and noise. As I aged it became one of my two passions, football and gambling. Every free moment was spent playing, practising and talking football, when I wasn't I was at the casino or the track. I was "discovered" at a young age playing for the school team, then the county and then for the country as a schoolboy. My playing career took off quickly until now I was at the highest level for my club and country.

Just two weeks ago I had been approached by two men who seemed to know all about my gambling, where I went, how much I gambled and most importantly how much I owed, a large amount and one I had no immediate hope of paying. The offer was simple, sway the big match against my team and all my debts would be cleared.

I needed time to decide.

I had always been good at taking penalties, a stone cold certainty to some, so it was natural that it was my turn as I had earned it. It was my chance to take control and win the game in the final few minutes 1-0.

Carefully placing the ball on the spot, I took a deep breath, walked back a few yards, took another deep breath to calm myself and started my run up. It was deadly quiet but my heart was racing and thumping so loud I thought that everyone must be able to hear, my foot came back and then made contact with the ball.

A few weeks later when all the excitement died down I couldn't believe the headlines. Two men held on grounds of bribery and implicating me in a betting fix. There were photos tape recordings of our conversation, I had been set up?

I had decided against taking up their bribe. With a new contract on offer from my club everything was working out, I had the money to pay them but didn't have the time to tell them.

How was I to know that I was going to miss the penalty?

Readers Writes

Cherry Pick your job - Some seven or so years ago I was qualified as an operator of the Brooklands Museum cherry-picker and used it mainly to clean the higher parts of the BAC 1-11. About a year ago the old machine was developing more and more snags and eventually the museum decided it was no longer viable and it was

scrapped. In early May this year a newer reconditioned machine was acquired and all the qualified operators had to have a conversion course and re-sit their operator license test.

The new machine operates in a different way to the old one, it first rises vertically by 'scissor' action and then there are three more extension systems. This allows the operator's cage to reach a maximum height of no less than 60 feet, some 30% higher than the old one. It can extend out sideways 34 feet. Initially when I used it, it was somewhat scary, being so high and still able to be moved along from the cage!

My first 'live' use of the machine came on 11th May when I operated it as a photo platform when the museum's Concorde was being turned around, spending some 4 hours up there during the day. On 2nd June I operated it again when I cleaned the high tail of the BAC 1-11.

On June 18th & 19th one of the museum's biggest events of the year took place, a re-enactment of a pre-war event called 'The Double Twelve'. When originally run it was planned to be a 24 hour race around the circuit but local residents objected to the potential night noise so it was run as two 12 hour events, hence its name. On one of the two days I expect to again operate the cherry-picker as a photo platform. Photographs are on the website www.theretirees.co.uk (My thanks to John Downey a Retiree for this article. Ed.)

A Retiree replies - Many thanks to Freddie Watts for his article which was most interesting. (see Issue 4 - April 2011 for the article. Ed.). In Pontefract, a Norman town, where I lived most of my life is a very large modern hospital still called The Infirmary. It has the remains of an ancient infirmary in its grounds. This was once part of a large community of Black Friars who funded their charity through their work by dispensing their medicines based on liquorice. They introduced the cultivation of this in the Pontefract area. (My thanks to Daphne Haynes for this article. Please send your comments and thoughts on any article to the Editor. Ed.)

The Editor is taken to task. (not for the first time)

In June's newsletter article re 2011, I would like to correct the referral to the occurrence of the number of various days of the week. I assume that the fact that these supposedly occur in July was missing.

However the mention that this only occurs every 823 years is incorrect. For any year the calendar replicates itself every 28 years. So any date will fall on the same day in another 28 years. However it may also be replicated at an interval other than 28 years. For example the following years also have the same feature, not only of July of this year, but in other months of this year: 2022, 2033, 2039, 2050, 2061, 2067, 2078, 2089, 2095. Yours in trivia mode, Roy Landon, ex Amex Bank Poole

(Yes the month of July was missing from the article, I blame the typist. Thank you for pointing it out. Ed.)

Nostalgia Corner

It has been pointed out to me by Vanessa and Andrew Mitchell that the website www.aquarterof.co.uk lists most of the sweets mentioned in last month's article and a lot more besides. Daphne Haynes also points out that there is a small shop in The Martlets, Burgess Hill, West Sussex that stocks many of the sweets mentioned. It seems that many of you also have fond memories and a sweet tooth.

Obituaries

We regret to note the death of the following pensioners.

Mr Anthony Edwin Kipps on the 5th May 2011 who lived in Thailand, Mr Kipps survived his wife Eileen Kipps who was an American Express Retiree.

Mrs HME Berry on the 23rd May 2011 who lived in Warsash, Hampshire.

Mr Marek Wodzicki on the 1st June 2011 who lived in Middlesex.

Michele Tyler on the 29th June 2011 aged 65 from Cranleigh, Surrey as advised by a friend, Luciano.

Quiz Corner - Economics

1. What word describes the undue increase in the quantity of money in proportion to buying power?
2. Which simple term defines the rate of increase of GDP?
3. Which simple term defines economic activity which has not been recoded through the tax system?
4. Which term describes the value of peoples income expressed in terms of its buying power?
5. What is the name of the effect where economic growth gains pass down through society and eventually increase development?
6. What is the term which describes the difference between the value of exports and the value of imports?
7. In 1995, which organization replaced GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade?
8. What is the better-known title of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development?
9. To which country's stock exchange does the DAX index belong?

10. Are you still awake?

Quiz No: 2

How many English words can you think of that rhyme with the word; BAKING? Try for 15.

14 useless facts *(well it was 16 but two were a bit rude)*

If you yelled for 8 years, 7 months and 6 days you would have produced enough sound energy to heat one cup of coffee. *(Hardly seems worth it.)*

The human heart creates enough pressure to squirt blood 30 feet. *(Don't try this at home)*

A cockroach will live nine days without its head before it starves to death. *(Creepy.)*

Banging your head against a wall uses 150 calories an hour. *(Don't try this at home either.)*

The male praying mantis cannot copulate while its head is attached to its body. The female initiates sex by ripping the male's head off. *(Honey, I'm home. What the...?)*

The flea can jump 350 times its body length. *(Cold feet on your back have the same effect)*

The catfish has over 27,000 taste buds. *(What could be so tasty on the bottom of a pond?)*

Butterflies taste with their feet. *(Something I always wanted to know.)*

The strongest muscle in the body is the tongue. *(No comment)*

Right-handed people live, on average, nine years longer than left-handed people. *(What if you're ambidextrous?)*

Elephants are the only animals that cannot jump. *(Thank goodness for that)*

A cat's urine glows under a black light. *(I wonder how much the government paid to figure that out.)*

An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain. *(I know some people like that.)*

Starfish have no brains. *(I know even more people like that.)*

Economic Quiz Answers

1. Inflation

2. Economic growth

3. The black economy

4. The real wage

5. Trickle down effect

6. Balance of trade

7. WTO (World Trade Organisation)

8. The World Bank

9. Germany

10. Barely

Quiz No: 2 - Answers

BAKING - making - taking - waking - haymaking - dressmaking - lovemaking - backbreaking - housebreaking - heartbreaking - earthshaking - stocktaking - breathtaking - painstaking - merrymaking and finally undertaking. (After all that I'm not surprised!)

And finally

A boxer phones his manager. "Get me a fight with Tiger McGraw!"

The manager says "I can't do that, you're finished, you've taken too many punches. No more fights for you."

The fighter says "Just one more fight against Tiger McGraw."

"Why?" said the manager.

"He's needling me" said the boxer "everywhere I go people taunt me by shouting out; Tiger McGraw, Tiger McGraw, Tiger McGraw. I can't take much more. There's nothing wrong with me, but I do need to prove myself against him. **JUST GET ME THE FIGHT.**"

The manager replied "**NO MORE FIGHTS**, you've taken enough."

"Why do you keep saying that?" said the boxer.

"Because" said the manager "you are Tiger McGraw."

Retirees Club Committee - Contact Details

Chairman: Chris Belton

e-mail: Chairman@theretirees.co.uk

Tel: 01444 250387

Treasurer: Susan Clay-Joyce

e-mail: sshipway2000@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 01273 565009

Events Sec.: Eadie Forgham

e-mail: edithforgham@btinternet.com

Tel: 01273 588992

News Editor: Peter Smith

e-mail: news@theretirees.co.uk

Tel: 01243 552045

(NB. New Retirees only - If you are recently retired and seeing this Newsletter for the first time - welcome to The Retirees Club. You are invited to attend any of our events and this invitation is extended to your guests. Details of our events together with all other Retiree news can be found on our website www.theretirees.co.uk . Remember too that you must "opt in" if you wish to continue to receive the Newsletter in the mail.)

CONTACT ADDRESS FOR RETIREE'S AND RELATIVES

The Retiree Club does not keep any address records. To reduce any delay;

All change of address requests or any other items pertinent to a pension payment must quote a roll number and be referred to The American Express UK Pension Plan, ACS, Newfoundland Court, 31-49 Newfoundland Circus, Bristol, BS2 9AP as an authorized signature is required. Helpline 0870 901 6972. Or e-mail penpayroll@acs-inc.com. (ACS is a Xerox Company)

We regret that The Retirees Club is not able to do this for you.

Diary of Booked Events for 2011					New or revised Events shown in bold Roman type are	
Date	Month	Time	Title	Location	Organiser or Speaker	Notes
21st	Jul	2pm	Inns and Taverns of Old Arundel	Fargo Room	Rupert Brooks	No charge
1st	Sept.	2pm	HMP Lewes	Fargo Room	Robin Eldridge, Governor of HMP Lewes	No charge
22nd	Sept.	3.30pm	Private behind the scenes tour	Preston Manor	Chris Belton	£10.50ph
tba	tba	2pm	Telly Addicts a quiz	Fargo Room	Peter Smith	No charge

It has been pointed out before but it's worth repeating, any Retiree and their friends and family are welcome to come to any club event at Amex House or any other venue. Very occasionally where it is an "extra special" event, we might have to restrict entry but if this occurs we would make it very clear in our pre-advertising. If it is held in Amex House you will have to sign in at the Security desk but don't be deterred, come along to any event and bring your friends and or family. Where possible Events are always held on a Thursday.

Travel to and from Amex House *(All buses in Brighton go to & from The Old Steine. Parking is difficult and can be expensive.)*

Burgess Hill, Church Road and other stops No: 40 & 40X buses every 20-30 minutes to The Old Steine. South Coast Road A259 from the east, 12, 12A, 14, 14C, 27 every 10 -20 minutes to The Old Steine. The 14C goes down Edward Street via the Sussex County Hospital. The returns are picked up at the Aquarium. From Portslade, 1 and 1a via New Church Road, Western Road and North Street to Edward Street.

✂

The Chairman,
American Express Retirees' Club
54 Bramble Gardens,
Burgess Hill,
West Sussex, RH15 8UQ.

Donation - 2011



I wish to make a donation and enclose a cheque for £..... Please make cheques payable to "American Express Retirees Club" all donations will be acknowledged.

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