



# The Probus Club of Locks Heath

Volume 10: December 2020 "It's Christma"

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## Welcome

Our club (official title "Probus Club of Locks Heath") was formed in 1981 and has developed over the years. We now have a membership of fifty which is the maximum we can accommodate at our venue. As such, we do have a short waiting list, but encourage those on it to attend meetings periodically when space permits!

We normally meet at 12.00pm. on the first Thursday of every month at [Sarisbury Green Community Centre](#) when we have a short business meeting and a Ploughman's Lunch followed by a Speaker and finish around 2.00pm. A pay bar is available.

We arrange group holidays, recent examples include a cruise to the Norwegian Fjords from Southampton with Fred Olsen Cruises, a visit to Lake Como in Italy and two river cruises in Europe, one travelling part way by Eurostar, as well as a cruise around Britain.

We organise outings, for example a visit to Greenwich and visits to the Chichester Festival Theatre as well as local events such as an annual Summer Event for members, wives and guests. A *Ladies Day* formal dinner is held in November. Photos from recent events and holidays can be seen in our [Photo Gallery](#).

This month's Newsletter features articles from two of our committee members both of which can also be seen in the new sections of our website [Memories](#), [Our Members](#) and [Blast from the Past](#) as well as articles on our first journey into the world of Zoom! A new section containing links to [Local News](#) has just been added

Our Newsletters for [March](#), [April](#), [May](#), [June](#), [July](#), [August](#), [September](#), [October](#) and [November](#) (featuring Probus Global) are also now available online.

Note that for easier navigation you can also [link directly to all sections of our web site from here](#)

## A Message from our President



Time marches on this year and little seems to change, with anxiety and frustration being two of the predominant feelings being experience. The continued lock downs and restrictions curbing our ability to lead a normal life have made a major impact on many. However as we come to the end of this dramatic year we can at least look forward to the new year with some degree of optimism

The news two vaccines, perhaps three, will be available and rolled out to most of the population in our age groupings within months must be good news. This has to be a very positive message and I hope the first of many. Perhaps we might be able to consider arranging a meeting in the new year providing we get our

vaccinations.

We now know we are locked into tier 2. This would appear to me we are back to the status quo, exactly the same position we were in before the latest lock down. The really good news is we can spend a little time with our love ones over the Christmas period. However this creates its own difficulties. My family when we are all together amount to sixteen. We have decided we will be split in two, half to my daughter and half to my son

During my ring round I am always very pleasantly surprised how well all our members are managing to cope under these difficult circumstances. Some have a few health problems which they seem to overcome with the help of friends and relatives

Unfortunately we lost two of our oldest members, David Douglas and Colin Orpe during October. Both had been in the club for over twenty years, both had served as President and both had served the Club well. They will be sadly missed by all the members and we send our deepest sympathy to Jane and Colin's family.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Colin for keeping us to date with Club business and to Chris for arranging the zoom lectures .

As we head towards Christmas I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you all a very **Happy Christmas** and a much better **New Year**. Please look after yourselves, we have managed to survive nine months so please do not take any chances.

Please contact me if you need any help in any way. I might not be able to help but I'm sure I know a man who can!

Take care and look after yourselves and family

Kind Regards

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## A rather different Army Career

By Lionel Jacobs



At the age of twenty one and having just finished a five year apprenticeship I was not very pleased to receive a letter from the Queen asking me if I would be kind enough to join the Army for two years. [National Service](#) was normally started at the age of eighteen. I was excused until I had finished the apprenticeship.

Because of my engineering background the obvious regiment for me to join was the [REME, Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers](#). I was summoned to report to the REME training battalion at Blandford on the 25 February 1955. There were twenty nine other young men joining on the same day, many of them looking as though they should be going to school not joining the army. We were here to

carry out our six weeks basic training or square bashing as it was known.

The first three weeks is virtually all square bashing, [marching up and down on the parade ground](#) until we all got it right. We learnt to salute and look after our equipment and how to keep the billet clean. Our [platoon commander](#) was a Corporal Martinez. I'm not sure of his nationality but he was not a very nice person. He would pick on individuals and try and belittle them as much as he could. If we got things wrong he would double us round the parade ground in full kit until we could go no further.

He picked particularly on a young Scottish lad by the name of Billy. When Billy arrived at the camp he had long hair, velvet collars on his long coat. He was in fact a [teddy boy](#) and Corporal Martinez did not like teddy boys, He really did give him a hard time.

After the [square bashing](#) we were taken to the rifle range for practice and then started field exercises. We were given rifles with blanks and had to carry all our equipment to make things realistic. During this exercise Corporal Martinez and five others, including me, ran across this clearing. When we got to the other side there was no Corporal Martinez. We went back and found him face down in the mud. He had a hole in his back where someone had shot him at close range. Blanks in rifles won't kill but they will certainly burn holes if they are fired at close range.

Corporal Martinez was ok but the next morning the five who were with him was up before the [Commanding Officer](#) wanting to know what had happened the day before. We knew that it was Billy who had shot the Corporal but we did not want to let him down. It began to get very serious and at one time all five of us were going to be court marshalled. Much to our relief Billy finally owned up and we were free to go. Billy was sentenced to six months in the army prison in Colchester.

After three weeks all new entrants are given a [TAB injection](#). This is one of many you will receive during your army service. The TAB injection is particularly strong with severe side effects. All participants' are given thirty six hours free of duties. I was the only one of the platoon that had no side effects in fact I was helping all those who very poorly.

At the end of the six week period you had your final booster [TAB injection](#). I personally do not remember having mine as I came to life five days later in hospital. What had happened was the first injection I had did not take and when I received the booster jab my body could not cope



This one incident changed the path of my army career. By the time I was released from hospital my platoon has been posted to [Tripoli](#). I really have no idea what British troops were doing in Tripoli in 1955. I was returned to [Blandford](#) and I don't think they knew what to do with me so I became [batman](#) to the Commanding Officer. This entailed me being at his house by seven every day, making sure his uniform was clean and pressed, and his boots cleaned. After he left for work I became Mary the house maid. My duties included washing up, hoovering, making the beds and general housework.

After one month of being Mary, I was transferred to the armoured vehicle workshops in Bordon. I did a six week course on tanks, mainly the [Centurian](#) and [Comet](#). At the end of the six weeks we all had to sit an exam to prove our competence. Once again because of my engineering background I did very well in the exam. The next day I was summoned to the Major in charge who asked me if I would like to become a tank instructor.

This suited me fine because I had just got married and [Bordon](#) was only forty miles from home. I started off teaching new recruits but

ended up teaching officer cadet's. These were all young men who had graduated from university and offered a [commission](#). I would teach them in the classroom for one week. They would then go to the workshops to learn how to take out engines, gearboxes, and final drives.

To finish their training three tanks were placed on the heath. The group were split into groups of seven, Each group were given a [map reference](#), then had to find the position of the designated tank and either remove the engine the gearbox or the final drive. This was done under battle conditions. They had to arrange all the equipment needed including lifting, gear lighting, food and they had to work until the job was finished. My job was to drive to each site and make sure they were coping. When they finished the work they were allowed to drive the tank on the [heath](#).

The Centurian weighed 63 tons and had a tank capacity of 180 gallons. If the tank was driven on the heath for 3 hours the tanks would be empty. The miles to the gallon was 5 gallons to the mile.

My army career ended in [March 1957](#). I had some good times in the army and meet some wonderful people, I still do not understand what I was guarding in the middle of Salisbury plain in January 1956 at minus three degrees. This is the army, if it moves you salute it, if it does not move you paint it!

## School Boy National Sailing Championships

August 1952

By Graham Adams



The date was Friday 22 August 1952 and with two school friends we were on our way to participate in The [School Boys National Sailing Championship](#). The event was organised by [The Mudhook Yacht Club](#) on the Gareloch using McGuers boat yard as their HQ. No ordinary transport for us but we had hitched a ride on a trailer from New Malden Surrey to Edinburgh. The three of us with all our camping gear had positioned ourselves between the trailer floor and load. The load was [John Cobb's ill fated Crusader](#) on it way to [Loch Ness](#) in an attempt to break Sir Malcom Campbell's water speed record.

You may ask how did they manage that! It started earlier in the year when my school was invited to participate in the regatta. As Captain of sailing I asked the Head Master George Renwick if the school would send a team, a suggestion that met with his enthusiasm. I thought it would as the previous year he had given me a very supportive letter confirming to a boat hire company that we would be suitable young men to hire one of their [traditional Norfolk Broad's sailing boats](#) but that is another story.

How did we find ourselves traveling with Crusader? In the mid 1930's my father had met [Captain Malcom Campbell](#) and that resulted in his transporting the [Blue Bird cars and boats](#) until Donalds Death in 1967. The Campbell's and Cobb's were friends so I think that was how my father met John Cobb. As my father's business premises were near London they were used for the Press Release on Thursday 21 August.

When it was realised that the lorry would be on its way to Scotland at the right time for us to get to the [Gareloch](#). Dad asked if we could hitch a lift. No Method Statement or Risk Assessment required!! So that is how we found ourselves on the trailer under the boat. Because of the vehicle configuration the driver Charlie Mackenzie

had to have an assistant known as the [drivers mate](#). Occasionally one of us would squeeze into the cab with the two of them, I think they felt sorry for us bouncing about under the boat.



The first night we made it to [Stilton](#) being to young to join Charlie and his mate in the pub we had fish and chips in our luxury surroundings got out our sleeping bags and settled down for the night. At some time we heard a lot of noise and jumped out from under the boat to find someone trying to force the cab door open, I don't know who was the most surprised but they run off and we returned to bed!! As nothing had been stolen we just left in the morning for [Scot's Corner](#) where Charlie and his mate were booked for the night.

Scot's Corner was and still is a [lorry park B&B and cafe](#) so we had our meal all together when the proprietor's wife learned we were sleeping in the vehicle she insisted in lending us three pillows for the night, I don't know exactly at what time but early in the morning Charlie and his mate came rushing out followed by an irate woman who wanted her pillows returned and Charlie and his mate off the premises. I later learned that some impropriety had taken place !!!!

When we arrived in Edinburgh on Sunday we had to find our way across to The Gareloch by train and bus with our tent and equipment. On arrival at [McGruer's boat yard](#) we registered and found we were the only team to be camping in the field next to the family house. Next morning the three of us were allocated a boat our experience had been limited to either 18ft [Sharpie Snipes](#) or 23ft [Admiralty Whaler's](#) a far cry from the out and out racing [Dragons](#) we were all to be using.



We were ferried out to the boats and introduced to the caretaker who had been given the responsibility for seeing that we knew what we were doing, he greeted us with I'm a sailor off one of the vessels moored in the loch. I don't understand sails but I expect you three are experts if you want me I will be reading my book down below and I have smuggled some [whisky](#) off the boat to keep me warm. Well we had to make a plan so we decided that we would each take one turn at the [helm](#) for the first three races and whoever had the best result would helm for the rest of the regatta.

I took the first race followed by Noel Varley known to everyone as Charlie Varley (long before [the two Ronnies](#) adopted the name) and Nick Croad went third and proved to be by far the best. It didn't take us long to find our way around especially as [spinnakers](#) were not to be used. I wonder why?? I can't remember the final results but I think we came fifth or sixth with all the places above us being taken by local schools. The McGruer's took pity on us, allowing us to use their bathroom and fed us on several occasions. I learned afterwards that during the war McGruer's had built [Air Sea Rescue Launches](#) and my fathers transport company had collected them for delivery to the south coast.

The journey home was less eventful than the one up but what we had not understood was that the cheapest way home was by coach and we were not the only passengers. We went to book three seat from [Glasgow to London](#) and were asked when do you want to travel laddy. Not a chance came the reply, when Mr McGruer heard this, as we were using his phone he said leave it to me. He knew a

Mr Sword a director of [Scottish Motor Traction](#) and suddenly tickets appeared.

**Editors Note:** *Look carefully at the first photo and you might even spot Graham hiding.....*

## Titanic on 19th November



Our talk started with our speaker providing an overview of the [Sea City Museum](#) and the the "interesting" fact that the toilets for for the centre are located in the old prison cells. If you do need to use them, don't get locked in!

Back to Titanic.... [Captain Smith](#) who had captained a range of [White Star liners](#) prior to taking on this role was highly regarded within the industry and by his peers having captained a number of of different vessels during his career. He led an experienced team including second officer [Charles Lightoller](#), the only officer to survive and who later sailed to help the [Dunkirk evacuation](#).

The boat was well covered with [lookouts](#), six in total working in pairs, so what went wrong resulting in over 1,500 deaths, many from the City of Southampton. The [Crew Wall](#) in the museum shows locals that are known to have died with many people drawn to work on the boat during a period of high unemployment and poverty.

### Some interesting and perhaps irrelevant facts:

Titanic consumed one ton of coal every two minutes. There are claims that it was actually an [uncontrolled coal fire onboard](#) that sank the ship!

There were twenty three [women stewardesses](#) on board (of which 20 were saved). One, [Violet Jessop](#) went on to serve on [Britannic](#), a British [Red Cross hospital ship](#), during the First World War. They were paid half the wages of men doing the same job.

There were fourteen Bakers. One of the Many heroes on board, [Charles Laughlin](#) the head chef, threw deckchairs for people to hold as well as preparing bread and food parcels for use on the [lifeboats](#). He survived in the sea for two hours before being rescued possibly as a result of being off duty and just having consumed a "reasonable" amount of alcohol that evening!

He subsequently moved to America where he crewed on several ships usually in a catering capacity. You can see his statement to the [British Enquiry](#) here



There were [Dog Kennels](#) on board, three of the twelve dogs on Titanic actually survived being given places on lifeboats, although men were denied boarding when spaces in boats were available.

Rumours that at least [one man dressed as a woman](#) to escape the boat are thought to be untrue.



The ill fated voyage almost didn't happen as [a collision with SS New York](#) in the harbour which would have prevented Titanic sailing was narrowly avoided.

[Originally planned to have 48 lifeboats](#), the number was reduced to 20 to make a [promenade area](#) for first class passengers.

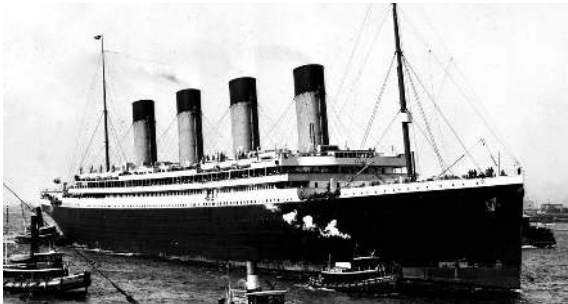
The most [expensive first class cabin](#) on board was rumoured to have cost the equivalent of 60,000 dollars today. [Second class](#) was equally luxurious comparable in most ways to the first. You can find more details of the [different classes and cabins](#) online.

On August 14th several [ice warnings](#) were received from the Californian and other nearby ships. Wireless operator [Jack Philips](#) apparently chose to ignore the warnings sent from other ships and eventually turned off contact with them. The rest is, as they say, history.

Two messages were sent, the familiar [SOS plus CQD](#) (Come Quickly in Distress) were with [nearby vessels](#) responding to save lives.

Did the band play on until she sunk or is it a myth, either way [you can hear some of the music that they played](#) here.

The unwritten "rule" [women and children first](#) was perhaps obeyed too strictly with lifeboats sometimes leaving the boat partly empty. More could have been saved although twenty of the twenty three [female crew](#) survived with Violet Jessop later sailing on the Olympic.



It was claimed that at least one man dressed as a woman to board a lifeboat.

With no internet and limited contact with the outside world it was difficult for families to get information about relatives onboard but eventually [reports began to come out across the world](#).

The Southampton museum has several recorded Titanic survivor accounts which can be directly accessed from their website. You can also see both [survivor accounts](#) and several other videos on the [British Pathe website](#).

To finish, [Olympic](#), Titanic's sister ship, had a very successful career as a Cruise Liner. There are amazingly many conspiracy theories as to whether it was the [Olympic rather than the Titanic that sank](#).

If you wish to explore more, download the [Titanic Trail](#) and the [Old Town Walk](#) dir use when you are next allowed to visit Southampton.

To finish, the [Sea City Museum](#) referred to at the beginning of this article opened on 10th April 2012, exactly 100 years after the Titanic sunk.

**Editor's Note:** The Museum is well worth a visit, one key exhibit on show, amongst many others, is detailed below:

### CAPTAIN SMITH'S SWORD



*Captain Smith perished with the Titanic. His Royal Naval Reserve sword, donated by his family in 1912 now features in SeaCity Museum in the Southampton's Titanic story exhibition.*

### And Finally

#### A Christmas Carol (Probus Style)

We've bought our Christmas presents

We'll wrap them in good time

The wonders Amazon sends us

Home delivered every time

We won't be having parties

But we'll still be of good cheer

Through goods that Tesco sends us

We're stocked up with wine and beer

It won't be the same as normal

We'll miss the friends we've lost

But life goes on without them

Despite the personal cost

So enjoy the Christmas season

And make the Probus toast

To fellowship and good friendship

Right now we need it most!

(Anon)

**The committee would like to wish all members, their family, friends and relatives a Very Merry Christmas (even if different to normal) and offer our Very Best Wishes for the New Year**

Please send your input for future Newsletters which will be now be produced quarterly to [probuslocksheath@gmail.com](mailto:probuslocksheath@gmail.com)