

The Retired Prison Governors

In co-operation with: The Prison Governors Association

NEWSLETTER

Founded in 1980 by Arthur Williamson — 35 years of continuous publication

ISSUE NO. 73



PERENNIS

AUTUMN 2015

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT



CONTENTS

1. Your Letters
2. The Pension Landscape
3. CSPA Travel Insurance
4. Minutes AGM 2015
5. Reunion and AGM
6. From The Treasurer
7. Allegations of Historical Abuse
8. Clickers Corner
9. Scanning The Political Horizon
10. Funerals—Info
11. When I Met Lord Hutchinson
12. What Do Cricket Fans Do In Winter

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Prison Governors Association, Retired Prison Governors Association or those of the editor

As I'm sure most of you already know, Mick Roebuck recently stood down from the editorship of the Newsletter, having left it in robust good health. I'm sure you will all join with me in thanking him for the major contribution he has made to the RPGA, for most of whose members there is nothing more important than the Newsletter. This is my first edition and I hope to continue the tradition of producing a newsletter worthy of the members. From time to time I may use the privileges of editorship to have my say and those of you know me would not expect anything less. As a firm believer in free speech, I can promise there will no censorship of opposing or critical views.

Some of you will be aware that I was the last editor of "The Key," the PGA's own in-house magazine. After I retired there was one final magazine devoted solely to unedited speeches from the 2010 conference, which brought publication to a close after 20 years and 79 issues. It was a great privilege to be Editor and largely enjoyable, but the biggest problem was persuading serving members to contribute. Those of you who still possess old editions, particularly from the 1990s, can't fail to notice that there was a real willingness to have a say about both criminal justice matters and trade union concerns.

Some of the contributors went on to very senior positions in the Service. By 2007 when I became Editor, it had become extremely difficult to get pieces and in the end the magazine became unhealthily identified with me. Out in the field freedom of speech had been effectively suppressed as people genuinely feared for their careers if they spoke out. This was (and remains) a very sad state of affairs. An organisation benefits from friendly and intelligent internal criticism, particularly from those with leadership roles. It ossifies if discussion is only permitted within approved boundaries and initiative is stifled.

Fortunately retired members are not so inhibited. Nevertheless there is no room for complacency as the voluntary principle in our society gradually erodes. It is your magazine and you make it, not the Editor. As long as people have their opinions to express, their activities in retirement to tell us about, and former colleagues to pass on news about, then the Newsletter will continue to thrive. Any changes I make I hope will be organic and in the spirit of continuity. It is important that the Newsletter you know and love remains familiar and accessible.

PAUL LAXTON, EDITOR

THE PENSIONS LANDSCAPE:

SUMMARY OF REVIEW GIVEN BY DON MAKEPEACE, VICE-CHAIR OF THE CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONERS' ALLIANCE TO THE RPGA ANNUAL REUNION ON 17 JUNE 2015

Don addressed the reunion in the pre-lunch session. He started by briefly explaining what the CSPA does and then covered the key issues of current concern.

He began by noting that of the three main parties in England and Wales, only the Conservatives had committed themselves to maintaining the four universal pensioner benefits: free TV licences for the over 75s, the winter heating allowance, free prescriptions for over 60s, and the bus pass for those who have reached state pension age, during the election campaign. Their re-election should secure these at least for the duration of this parliament, although during questions, it was suggested that the government could cut the bill for these provisions by including universal pensioner benefits within the overall welfare budget and reducing that budget, without openly breaking the promise.

A questioner noted that prescriptions, currently free at 60 years of age, were vulnerable to being denied until reaching state pension age. Don also commented that the bus pass is of limited use in rural areas where buses are infrequent and being cut further. The Conservatives also promised to maintain the "triple lock", although sadly this does not apply to our civil service pensions.

Another key theme of Don's address was the move to the single tier state pension in 2016 for new state pensioners and the anomalous situation this will bring about whereby existing state pensioners will be excluded from the new scheme. The CSPA is concerned that any future pension improvements will focus on the new scheme. Along with other pensioner organisations they intend to campaign for the new pension to be applied to current old age pensioners. Don paid tribute to the outgoing Pensions Minister, Steve Webb, as someone who really did know his subject, despite the incomplete nature of his reforms and the legal confrontation over pension indexation.

Don also noted that a return to RPI for up-rating CS pensions is effectively dead in the water. The CSPA had worked with other pensioner organisations and a number of trade unions to challenge the switch from RPI to the less beneficial CPI, taking their case to the High Court where they lost on one key argument by a majority decision of the judges. However, the use of CPI is being questioned by a key professional body in this field and the issue may be reopened.

Don mentioned the continuing question about the best method of paying for Care in a society with growing numbers of aging people and felt we are bound to return to this debate.

Finally Don turned to the CSPA, which after a number of years of slow decline, was now attracting additional members through new membership benefits, including a very competitive travel insurance scheme that does not penalise people who have suffered illness, if they are fit to travel. A new retail discount scheme is being introduced and legal and IT advisors are well used by members.

The Chairman thanked Don for a stimulating talk that provoked a number of questions and exposed that, even among well read and well educated professionals, there was a degree of ignorance about the new single tier state pension and, in particular, the effects of contracting out of SERPS and paying a reduced national insurance contribution, as we all did as part of civil service terms and conditions.

PAUL LAXTON

CSPA Travel Insurance

At the AGM there was a discussion about the advantages of the travel insurance available through the Civil Servants Pensioners Alliance and it was felt that members who have not joined the CSPA may like to see the details of this.

The Scheme offers annual comprehensive worldwide travel insurance cover to CSPA members and their families, underwritten by AXA PPP Healthcare. There is no medical screening prior to joining. Provided you are fit to travel and not suffering from a terminal illness you are covered to travel worldwide. Pre-existing conditions are also covered except for certain problems related to mental health. If you join prior to your 85th birthday you are able to remain in the scheme for life.

The travel insurance rates (including the 20% Tax) are single person: £172.50; married couple/partners: £235.00; family: £252.50 or single parent: £235.

The prime purpose of the CSPA is to campaign to maintain CS pensions and on other issues affecting pensioners, but it also has a policy of developing membership services tailored for members, such as the travel insurance. It currently offers a range of discounts on holidays and other services as well as IT and legal help lines and is in talks with an organisation to deliver a full range of retail discounts.

If you are not a CSPA member and want to join (£18 pa) there is an application form on the CSPA website and a copy is attached which shows contact details.

Retired Prison Governors Association

A section of The Prison Governors Association

Treasurer

Graham Mumby-Croft
graham.mumbycroft@gmail.com

Chairman

Graham Smith
graham.smith646@hotmail.co.uk

Secretary

Ray London
raymond_london@hotmail.com

(Draft) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held at Newbold Revel 16th June 2015 at 1430hrs

1. Attendees.

Committee: Graham Smith (Chairman), Ray London (Secretary), Graham Mumby-Croft (Treasurer), Jan Thompson, Alan Hall, Mick Roebuck, Bob Duncan, Dave Taylor, Harry Brett, Paul Laxton, and Jenny Adams Young.

Members: Mick O'Brien, John Rumball, Brenda Brookes, Margaret Brookes, Mike Bolton, Dave Percival, Chris Duffin, Florence Herbert, John Dring.

Guests: Jacqueline Percival, Mary Roebuck, Midori Fachiri, Lynne Bowles.
24 in total.

2. Apologies

Apologies notified to the Secretary were from: Alan Bramley, Mike Selby, Doug Moon, Frank Flynn, George Ridley, Roger Outram, David Pike, Charles Smith and John Berry.

3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17th June 2014

These had been distributed to attendees prior to the meeting and were agreed as a true record.

Proposed :Alan Hall.

Seconded : John Dring.

There were no votes against.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Treasurer's Report, including Benevolent Fund

Graham Mumby-Croft gave the report. This year's accounts, (2014) have now been audited and certified by the accountants. Although we are a small association and our finances are quite limited, our accounts are audited because we are actually a part of the main Prison Governors Association. In consequence, our accounts form part of the wider PGA finances and are subject to audit.

The headlines for 2014 are that as an association we remain solvent and with a relatively good cash balance in the bank: however the overall financial position for the year is that for the second year running our expenditure exceeded our income, albeit by only a few hundred pounds. Fortunately most of the deficit for the year was accounted for by the writing off of the value of memorabilia which was purchased a couple of years ago and has never sold. Taking this into account the deficit for this year was £148.50p.

The less heartening news is that we are losing members at a faster rate than we are gaining them and as a result our income continues to decline year on year. This situation is made worse by the fact that previously some subscriptions have been paid by Standing Order, This means that it is extremely complicated to increase subscription rates as this would involve having to ask every single paying member to resubmit a Standing Order Mandate through the Treasurer to their bank. To add to this problem is the fact that historically subscription rates have been set for each member at the rate in place at the time of joining, which means that we have members paying at rates that range from £5/year to £17/year.

Our Treasurer raised this issue with the Committee at our last meeting and we have now set in place a small working group to look at ways of ensuring that our income can at the very least match expenditure and ensure that our funds are not eroded to a point where the association would cease to be financially viable. Rest assured that this point is not so imminent that there is an urgent need to take action, but it is prudent to begin to look at the issue now, before it does become an issue.

The main expenditure of the association goes on the Newsletter and diaries and the postage costs involved in distributing these. The Committee are adamant that these services, and in particular the Newsletter, should continue, as communication from and with the membership is the primary purpose of the Association.

The Treasurer invited members present, and across the wider membership, to forward any suggestions that they might have for increasing income and controlling costs to him.

A summary of the accounts are attached. Should anyone wishing to view the full accounts please contact Graham Mumby-Croft.

6. Membership Report

Harry Brett distributed a summary sheet showing the changes in membership since the AGM in 2014. This shows a net loss of 22 members. He explained that sadly 14 of these had died, but we had seen 14 new members joining.

During the year he had worked with Graham Mumby-Croft to review membership subscriptions. This had led to discovering 3 with no trace. Unfortunately 15 members had resigned. During the presentation in the Morning Don Makepeace from the CSPA had mentioned Membership Packs for potential new members. This is an initiative that we can look at in the coming year.

7. Social Events

Graham Smith explained that support for the member's weekend had dwindled to such an extent that the event was no longer sustainable. The Committee had discussed what else we could do and had concluded that perhaps regional events would be more popular. Dave Taylor explained that he is in the process of contacting members in the North West to canvas support.

8. Public Service Pensioners Council.

Alan Hall reported that he had attended the AGM of The Public Service Pensioners Council (PSPC) on Friday 15th May 2015. As this was the first meeting he had attended, he was somewhat finding his way to the working of the PSPC, but felt he was met with a warm welcome and felt he soon settled into the format of the occasion.

Firstly he noted that the Chairman, Brian Sturtevant, seemed quite happy that the Conservatives had won the election as they appeared to have a clear manifesto regarding pensioner benefits, i.e. The Triple Lock, but the downside is that it looks like the question of RPI and CPI is over and done with as the Tories are opposed to changing it, as too, is the issue of extra tax relief for pensioners.

He also mentioned the speakers from the three main parties who had attended the last Council Meeting to set out their parties' Policies on Pensions. He stated this must have been the 'Kiss of Death' for them as none of them were elected at the General Election.

The next item on the Agenda worth noting was a motion put forward to raise subscriptions by the rate of inflation. (At 1.2% this equates to our subscription rising by £1 to £83). At this point the decision was to incur the wrath of our Treasurer Graham Mumby-Croft by voting 'for', or make a show by objecting. The former was chosen. The sting in the tail is that next year subscriptions are likely to rise by more than the rate of inflation, owing to the fact that the National Union of Teachers (NUT) will be withdrawing their free administration support. The estimate for this service is about £5330 gross, £4440 net. Over the long term this would involve an increase of subscriptions around 50 per cent. Whilst the balance of the PSPC funds is currently quite healthy, the situation needs to be monitored.

There was some discussion on the issue of widow's pensions remaining if they remarry; it seems that some branches of the Civil Service retain their pension if they remarry. No decision was made and the debate is still ongoing.

The next motion was for all pensions to be Triple Locked as in the case of the State Pension. This motion was carried.

The Single Tier Pension. The PSPC is concerned that existing Pensioners could lose out, and that means testing will continue in the system for many years to come. It was stated that the PSPC will be asking the Government to make a commitment to an early review to consider including existing pensioners on a non-detrimental basis.

The election for the Executive Committee for 2015/16 saw all the nominees returned unopposed.

9. Newsletter

Paul Laxton thanked Mick Roebuck for all his hard work as Editor of the Newsletter. He hopes the change of Editorship will be unnoticed and that the Newsletter will continue to flourish. He noted that the Newsletter is one of the most important features of the Retired Prison Governors Association. To this end he asked for contributions for the next edition.

10. Email Register and Website.

Harry Brett is taking over the email Register and will be responsible for disseminating information. Roger Outram has declared an interest in this as well, and could be co-opted onto the Committee if necessary.

Harry Brett will liaise with Sean Williamson to ensure the PGA Web site is kept updated.

11. Election of Officers

There were no Committee Members due for re election this year.

12. Format for Reunion Day and AGM 2016

The General consensus is that the format works well, and that the Committee should organise a similar event next year. Ray London reported that we are now charged by NOMS for the room (£75). Lynne Bowles asked if it is possible to introduce an element of the Garden Party to the Day. Graham Mumby-Croft replied that in the days of the Garden Party, the PGA met the costs of Retired Members events.

13 Date of next Reunion Day and Annual General Meeting

Provisional date 14th June 2016.

Summary of Accounts for Financial Year 2014

Retired Prison Governors Association Reunion and Annual General Meeting

Newbold Revel – 16th June 2015

By 1100 hrs on the above day, 24 members of the RPGA had gathered in the Coffee Shop at Newbold Revel for the 2015 Reunion and AGM.

After we moved to the Mowbray Room, (formerly the Games Room), Graham Smith as Chairman gave an initial welcome and outlined the format for the day. He introduced the Committee Members before welcoming Don Makepeace from The Civil Service Pensioners Alliance (CSPA).

Don gave a very interesting talk on the work of the CSPA, explaining that they are recognised by the Cabinet Office to represent Civil Service Pensioners, as well as working with other interested bodies on a wider range of pensioners' issues, such as the challenge to RPI/CPI, retaining TV Licenses for the over-80s, free prescriptions, and retaining bus passes. More recently they have been working to ensure better social care, universal benefits and state pensions. Of concern is that existing Pensioners may not see any uplift in their pensions until after 2016.

He outlined the range of member's benefits including particularly favourable discounts on house and travel insurance.

In reply to a question from John Dring about pension forecasts, Don replied that he was aware that there were considerable delays due to the administration being overwhelmed. Jenny Adams Young asked if the CSPA had any specific legal insurance. She explained that several of our members and other retired Governors had been interviewed by police over historic events and asked if legal cover Insurance was offered. Don explained that no specific cover was offered through the CSPA, but he was aware that legal cover can be available with some other Insurance Policies.

Dave Taylor asked how the CSPA recruit new members. As the Civil Service is such a diverse organisation, this is not easy. Union Conferences, visits to larger offices and Recruitment Packs are some of the most successful ways of recruiting new members, combined with promoting the benefits of Membership.

2015 Reunion – Rogues' Gallery (Continued)



2015 Reunion - Rogues' Gallery



From The Treasurer.

In presenting my financial report at the March Committee meeting, and again at the AGM in June of this year, I took the opportunity to highlight the fact that for 2 consecutive years, (2013 & 2014) the expenditure of the association has exceeded income. Although at the moment these figures are only a few hundred pounds, what I was pointing out was the fact that it is an unfortunate reality that our membership is getting smaller and our costs are increasing.

Let me deal with the membership issue first. I have pointed out before in this column that one of the main anomalies that I inherited when I took over as Treasurer was the fact that the cost of membership for each member is fixed at the amount they paid as subscriptions, at the time they joined. In reality this means that we have a range of subscription rates that begin at £5/year and run to £17/year, which is the current cost of membership, and includes a PGA diary. There have been various discussions at committee level as to how to tackle this problem and each time the decision has been to postpone the discussion, mainly based on the concern that any radical change in subscriptions, particularly for the longer serving members who are paying the lower rates, is likely to result in them deciding not to continue their membership.

However at the committee meeting in March 2015 it was decided that a small working group would look at the situation and report back to the committee with some possible options to improve the situation. There was no time limit placed on this work, because as I pointed out to the committee we have a surplus of cash in the bank at the moment and at current rates of decline it would be 3/5-years before we hit a serious problem with cash-flow. We do not though have room for complacency, and we really do need to think about the future viability of the organisation and to look seriously at possible ways to increase our income.

Any organisation managing its finances has to look at its operating costs as well as its income, in order to try to balance the books. In the financial year 2014 the total income for the RPGA was £6,116-00p which comes entirely from members subscriptions. Expenditure for the same period was £6,256.57p a deficit of £140-43p.

The main expenditure during the year, and the largest single cost was the publication of the two newsletters, (Spring and Autumn) and in total these cost £3,349-49p to print and distribute, and this equates to 53% of total spending, or almost 55% of income. It was the unanimous view of the committee in discussing the financial situation that the newsletter forms the backbone of the organisation, and is the primary means of communication with our members, and therefore it should remain the one thing that we do not scrimp on in terms of costs.

Another large cost is for the PGA diaries. These cost us £3-75p each and in 2014 we purchased 260 of these at a total cost of £975. When the cost of postage is added they cost in total £1305 to purchase and distribute, a cost of £5-01p/diary. As the current cost of membership is £17 including a diary or £13 without you will see that we are in fact losing £1.01 on each and every diary that we purchase and post to members.

The final significant cost is the actual cost of running the association, committee meetings, attendance at CSPA meetings and work associated with pensions. The cost to the association is approximately £1500/year and also includes some postage and stationary costs. This equates to 24.5% of income and is another area that needs to be looked at to see if costs can be reduced. However there are only 2 committee meetings per year and one AGM which is actually quite a slim programme anyway so the room for savings may not be great.

So as you can see there is work going on at committee level to ensure that the association can continue to exist, and remain financially viable into the foreseeable future. However the committee are of the view that we do not have all the answers and we would appreciate the views of members who may have an idea, or an opinion of what might be done to either reduce costs, or increase income. Please feel free to contact me with your thoughts, my contact details are shown below.

The full accounts were presented at the AGM in June and if any member wishes to have a copy please contact me and one will be forwarded to you.

Graham Mumby-Croft
Treasurer

15 Thirsk Drive
North Hykeham
Lincoln
LN6 8SZ
Email graham.mumbycroft@gmail.com

Current Accounts and Benevolent Fund Account

Barclays Community Account (Current)	£-p
Carried Forward on 1/1/14	£8,035.46
Income from 1/1/14 to 31/12/14	
Subscriptions	£5,883.00
Donations	£0.00
Interest	£0.00
Other	£0.00
Sub Total	£5,883.00
Expenditure From 1/1/14 to 31/12/14	
Printing	£2,208.00
Stationary	£119.99
Post/Phone	£1,310.68
Travel/Subs	£1,210.90
Refunds	£60.00
Diaries	£975.00
PCPS	£82.00
Donations	£100.00
Miscellaneous	£190.00
Sub Total	£6,256.57
Totals	
Carried Forward on 1/1/14	£8,035.46
Income 1/1/14 to 31/12/14	£5,883.00
Expenditure 1/1/14 to 31/12/14	-£6,256.57
Balance at 31/12/14	£7,661.89
Outstanding cheques	£0.00

Lloyds Clubs & Societies Account	£-p
Carried Forward on 1/1/14	£1,321.43
Income from 1/1/14 to 31/12/14	
Subscriptions	£233.00
Expenditure From 1/1/14 to 31/12/14	£0.00
Balance at 31/12/14	£1,554.43

Income 1/1/14 to 31/12/14	£-p
Barclays Acc	£5,883.00
Lloyds Clubs & Societies Account	£233.00
Total Income for year ended 31/12/14	£6,116.00

Cash Balance @31/12/14	2014	2013	2014 Variation
Barclays Account	£7,661.89	£8,035.43	-£373.54
Lloyds Clubs & Societies Account	£1,554.43	£1,321.43	£233.00
Stamps Held by Treasurer	£1.00	£9.00	-£8.00
Value of memorabilia	£0.00	£202.18	-£202.18
Total Cash Balance	£9,217.32	£9,568.04	-£350.72

Benevolent Fund

Lloyds Benevolent Fund Account	£-p
Carried Forward on 1/1/14	£6,053.36
Grant as approved by Committee.	£500.00
Balance on account on 31/12/2014	£5,553.36

I certify that these accounts are correct and include all transactions
Signed

G.S. Mumby-Croft Treasurer Retired Prison Governors Association.

Date

Breakdown of Costs and Year on Year Comparison.

Expenditure	2014	2013	2014 Variation
Printing	£2,208.00	£3,201.74	-£993.74
Stationary	£119.99	£14.60	£105.39
Post/Phone	£1,310.68	£455.81	£854.87
Travel/Subs	£1,210.90	£1,316.59	-£105.69
Refunds	£60.00	£3.00	£57.00
Diaries	£975.00	£1,774.50	-£799.50
PCPS	£82.00	£80.00	£2.00
Donations	£100.00	£100.00	£0.00
Miscellaneous	£190.00	£315.30	-£125.30
Total	£6,256.57	£7,261.54	-£1,004.97

Valuation of Memorabilia Stock	
Value of stock at 1/1/14	£202.18
Value of stock at 31/12/14 (Write Off)	£0.00
No remaining stock	

Miscellaneous expenditure	
Voucher 34 £50 Amazon Voucher for Charles Smith on standing down from the committee.	£50.00
Voucher 34 £50 Amazon Voucher for Jim Blakey on standing down from the committee.	£50.00
Voucher 35 £40 Insertion fee for Spring Newsletter.	£40.00
£45 Insertion fee for Autumn Newsletter	£45.00
Total	£185.00

Signed
G.S. Mumby-Croft Treasurer Retired Prison Governors Association.
Date

Allegations of Historical Abuse

Retired colleagues, both members and non-members of the RPGA, will no doubt be aware of recent police investigations into allegations against prison staff at the former Medomsley Detention Centre and Kirklevington Grange.

They will also know of ongoing police enquiries into similar allegations in London and the South East regarding prominent figures in society, including former members of previous governments.

The Medomsley enquiry became a focus for discussion at a recent RPGA Committee Meeting, as one of our number had been contacted by a former colleague who had been invited for interview by the police. This person requested that the Committee member accompany him while he was interviewed under caution. Out of care and concern, the Committee member did so, also contacting a second retired colleague who was to be interviewed on similar issues. The second colleague declined the offer of support, saying he was content to go alone.

It should be borne in mind that most of those interviewed are advanced in years, some in their eighties and, in one case, nineties.

These issues have been of much concern to the Committee. We have neither the appropriate skills nor the funding to support such individuals, given that the RPGA was founded primarily to promote social interaction between retired colleagues and most of us are not legally qualified.

The current position, as I understand it, is that the PGA are unable to assist any such individuals as all the alleged events took place prior to its' formation in October 1987.

Nor do NOMS wish to fund legal fees for any former employees in this position as there is no contractual obligation on them to do so.

I have now had the opportunity of speaking to the present PGA solicitor about these issues.

So what is the best course of action for anyone invited to speak to the police about allegations concerning events which may have taken place many years ago?

My advice would be as follows:

1. These are serious allegations which, if convicted, could result in an individual going to prison for a long time. As such, it is totally inadvisable to agree to an interview without a solicitor being present. At the very least, an interviewee can insist on the Duty Solicitor being with them, although Duty Solicitors vary in experience, specialism and skills. In summation, it cannot be stressed too strongly that retired colleagues should refuse to be interviewed until they have obtained legal advice.
2. Ideally, the solicitor acting for a client in such cases should have a proven competent background in criminal law. Often he or she will ask for proper disclosure in advance and formulate a prepared statement with the client prior to any interview.
3. Criminal solicitors will need to be paid. It is possible that some interviewees may qualify for legal aid. Legal aid is always available for interviews under caution at the police station. Additionally, some of us may be unknowingly covered by house or bank account insurance, although I think this will probably be rare. You need to check your policies. In certain cases, fees can be recovered from the prosecuting authority, but this can be a complex area, and is dependent on the circumstances of each case.

While the PGA solicitor has emphasised that she herself is not a specialist in criminal law, she does know those who are. Should any of you find yourself in the situation where you need such help, she can be contacted on 07900 882263, when she has kindly agreed to recommend a good criminal solicitor in your area.

JENNY ADAMS-YOUNG

Clickers Corner

By Mick Roebuck



WINDOWS 10

Readers will recall that in a previous edition of the Newsletter I gave advance notice of the launch of Microsoft's Window 10 and how those of us with Windows 7 and above would receive free upgrades.

Given its' extensive media advertising most people will now be aware that Windows 10 was launched towards the end of July this year. The free upgrades are being rolled out to individual users, with a small icon appearing on your computer to advise you that your download is ready.

May I offer a word of caution at this early stage in proceedings. I was in my local computer shop a few days ago and raised with the proprietor the issue of Windows 10's free upgrade. His advice to me was not to accept the download at this moment in time, but to wait until Microsoft launched its' first service pack. He explained that numerous customers tried to download the early edition upgrade and have experienced a multitude of problems in doing so.

Further to this, Sony have advised anyone who uses one of its VAIO computers to hold off upgrading.

There have been numerous complaints from users who have attempted to download the upgrade, from its' taking 10 hrs to complete, some currently installed software not compatible, system slowing down etc.

I'm unsure when a service pack will be added to the upgrade but if your OS is running without any

problems than leave well alone for the time being.

Slow Computers

When you first got your system home and powered it up all was operating well, but over the weeks, months and in some cases years things have gradually become slower and slower. What used to be a racehorse has now become more of a carthorse.

There can be numerous reasons for this slow down and to name and explain all of them would take up more pages in the Newsletter than our treasurer would be willing to pay for. I will however attempt to list a few and hopefully one or more of them might prove useful.

Keeping your OS clean is one of the first steps, do ensure that you clean out your memory, do ensure that you regularly defragment you computer, and do ensure that you uninstall those programmes you installed but no longer use.

How to perform these simple tasks have been explained in previous editions, so do refer back to them.

You could also disable browser extensions that you seldom or never use. Once again this is a simple task to perform. i.e.

If you are using Chrome as a browser open the menu button which is indicated at the top of your screen by 3 small bars which form a square.

Once open, click on more tools, followed by a further click on the extensions button. Once opened, the screen will display the extensions on your system. You can un-tick them (recommended) or send them to the bin.

Those of you using Firefox as a browser can achieve the same function by clicking Menu, select Add -ons then the extension tab.

If you find that you do need that extension you can easily and quickly go back and re enable it.

SCANNING THE POLITICAL HORIZON

On the face of it the course of the new parliament is predictable. The new government has an overall majority, albeit only 12 seats, it has a program derived from its manifesto, and a determination to carry it out. So in theory that is what will happen. Although elected on only 36.9% of those voting, the lowest percentage ever polled by a government with a majority in the House of Commons, there are no real issues about its' legitimacy, unlike the outgoing Coalition.

However history tells us a different story. Firstly there is what Harold McMillan called "events" which can derail any government, and the recovery and response of the main opposition party in any parliament is notoriously difficult to second guess. Who could have possibly foreseen the emergence of Jeremy Corbyn as the new leader of the Labour party? This parliament is complicated by the presence of the SNP in unprecedented numbers, thanks to the sea change in the Scottish party political landscape that seems to have been generated by the referendum on independence in 2014. Added to this mixture is the journalistic scoop landed by James Landale, the BBC's Deputy Political Editor during the recent election campaign, in which he elicited from Mr Cameron that he would retire as Prime Minister before the end of the new parliament if re-elected. As we know he was re-elected and the succession question will be become increasingly topical once this parliament passes the half-way mark.

Looking back, who would have predicted at the start of the parliaments during which they succeeded to the leadership, that Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Margaret Thatcher and John Major would have gone on to be Prime Minister. Conservative leaders tend to fall under career buses whereas Labour leaders either resign voluntarily or die in office. Harold Wilson and Tony Blair, Labour's two most electorally successful leaders, both succeeded to the party leadership on the premature and unexpected deaths of Hugh Gaitskell and John Smith respectively. Tony Blair was not on the leadership radar at the start of the 1992-97 parliament and Harold Wilson had been soundly trounced by Gaitskell in a leadership contest just over two years before he got the job in the bitter winter of 1963.

No doubt the press will fill columns on quiet days with comment on the fluctuating political fortunes of George Osborne, Teresa May and Boris Johnson. There is no guarantee of a smooth ride over the economy and the Chancellor, Mr Osborne, is not the undisputed successor in the manner of Gordon Brown. Mrs May has already earned the nickname "Teflon Teresa." The Home Office is a notorious bed of nails and there is no guarantee that her luck will last, particularly as she needs effective answers to the migrant crisis at our borders, and needs to find them quickly. Boris Johnson is untried at cabinet minister level, a significant gap on his C.V. that will not be rectified until next year.

There is also the tantalising prospect of Mr Johnson leading the campaign to leave the EU which will either propel him to the premiership or political oblivion. Who are the potential dark horses? One stands out, Sajid Javid, the Business Secretary, who would become our first Prime Minister from a visible ethnic minority if he gets the job. Success in his current post will guarantee him promotion and he could be a serious contender towards the end of 2018 when Mr Cameron will need to carry out his promise to retire, if he has survived that long, for his successor to have time to bed into the job before the 2020 election.

With the election of Jeremy Corbyn the Labour party appears to have taken a dramatic lurch to the left in a way not seen for a generation. During the long campaign to elect the new leader the momentum behind the outsider, Jeremy Corbyn, gradually became unstoppable despite the fact that he is 66 years old in an era where the fashion is for newly-elected party leaders to be much younger. So venerable is Mr Corbyn that since 1900 only George Lansbury and Michael Foot have been older when first taking on the leadership of one of the major parties. Were Mr Corbyn to reside at 10 Downing Street after the 2020 election he would be the first septuagenarian to take the office for the first time since Lord Palmerston in 1855. Naturally the right wing press is having a field day but they would be wise to remember that the Tories were re-elected through gritted teeth by floating voters. I watched Mr Corbyn on the Andrew Marr show on 26 July. He was polite, personable and actually answered the questions put to him. David Cameron would be well advised not to put on his "Flashman" act at question time as it could well backfire.

I note that at the very first question time clash on 16 September Mr Cameron wisely resisted the temptation.

After Ed Miliband it is no surprise that the press and indeed his opponents within the Labour Party are concentrating on his electability, or more pertinently the perceived lack of it. The real problem for Mr Corbyn is that he commands the genuine support of barely 10% of the party's MP's so his Westminster honeymoon is likely to be something between short and non-existent. I struggle to conceive of a viable leadership whereby the leader commands the support of only 10% of parliamentary colleagues and where many senior figures have already refused to serve in a Corbyn-led shadow cabinet.

Nevertheless under party rules a leader can only be removed at annual conference, something which has not happened since 1935. Given the support Jeremy Corbyn received from ordinary members and the support he enjoys from the big trade unions with powerful block votes at Labour's annual gathering it is difficult to imagine him being ditched unless Labour's opinion poll ratings fall through the floor, and perhaps not even then. He will need a combination of external events and major disasters striking the government if the prospect of 10 Downing Street is not to drift away irrevocably in this parliament.

What predictable bear traps await the government? At the time of writing the migrant crisis in Calais, which is not going to go away any time soon, has vacated the front pages in favour of a much bigger migrant crisis on the EU's southern and eastern borders. There is no united response from European leaders. For Mr Cameron the migrant question poses a huge threat to his plan to present Harold Wilson style cosmetic reforms to the EU as a diplomatic triumph prior to winning a great victory in the referendum on EU membership promised before the end of 2017.

The polls have shown a dramatic surge towards leaving the EU which must delight UKIP and its leader, Nigel Farage. The migrant crisis is meat and drink to the party which won nearly four million votes at the last election. Despite a period of chaos at the top in the wake of Nigel Farage's inability to win a Westminster seat, UKIP seems to have weathered the storm. If Mr Cameron

comes back from the negotiations for the reform of the EU with nothing that allays the concerns of UK voters (which seems very likely), then this presents UKIP with an open goal. That may not necessarily translate into Britain leaving the EU, but it could lead to a situation whereby far from settling the issue, rather like the referendum in Scotland in 2014, it only makes a further referendum inevitable. Additionally Nicola Sturgeon will not hesitate to demand a second referendum on Scottish independence if Britain as a whole does vote to leave the EU but Scotland does not. These are circumstances that could see David Cameron leaving the stage rather earlier than planned.

Further afield the Middle East remains volatile with all that could mean for oil prices. Thankfully there is unlikely to be a Commons majority for more ill judged interference in civil wars in the middle east. There is no prospect of a Falklands style victory on the battlefield to rescue the fortunes of an unpopular government whereas there is every possibility of more acts of Islamist terror on our streets.

At home public tolerance of austerity is bound to have limits, something that Mr Corbyn and his followers will be seeking to tap into. A further and prolonged slowdown in the Chinese economy cannot fail but to have consequences for UK PLC. Also it must be remembered that the banks, the foreign-owned utility companies and the privatised railway system are far from popular with voters. If there is now room for a populist party on the right in the form of UKIP, is there potentially room for a populist party of the left that attacks an alternative set of bogeymen? I think probably not. UKIP will also be the beneficiary of splits and chaos in the Labour party.

Whoever leads Labour has to deal with the disconnect that has grown between Labour and its core vote, particularly over immigration, but also over environmental policy which has seen fuel prices sprint ahead of inflation. Mr Corbyn is known to support an open door immigration policy and has already made his accommodation with the EU having previously been considered a Euro sceptic. Labour cannot continue to dismiss working class voters as bigots for raising legitimate concerns about an immigration policy which depresses wages, puts up house prices and rents, and puts intolerable strain on schools and other public services in certain parts of the country.

The next election could see Labour in danger of becoming confined to London and a few other urban enclaves with large student and/or large ethnic minority populations that are immune to the blandishments of UKIP. In England Labour cannot deny that the process of losing votes to UKIP has already begun. There is no obvious way back for them in Scotland in the medium term.

The Liberal Democrats have fallen dramatically from grace. From being a party of government, albeit in a coalition, they are now once more a fringe party. All the hard work rebuilding the party's electoral fortunes over five decades before Mr Clegg took them into the Coalition has been rendered irrelevant. Who would have thought that university tuition fees would have wrecked a once-great party? The Liberal Democrats were destroyed in their laboriously built strongholds in the West Country and affluent South West London boroughs, but more interesting is the evidence of younger educated voters deserting the party for Labour. A substantial move to the left under Mr Corbyn will only accelerate that tendency.

During the Blair ascendancy Labour often found itself outflanked on the left by the Liberal Democrats. Coalition with the Tories destroyed the party's left-wing credibility. The Liberal Democrats used to salivate at the prospect of by-elections. That delight will almost certainly pass to UKIP. Just to demonstrate how irrelevant the Liberal Democrats have become, the defeated candidate for the party leadership was heard to call for more gay characters in Peppa Pig. The party that made the principled stand over the Iraq invasion a mere twelve years ago is surely heading for the knackers' yard if this is the intellectual level to which it has fallen.

One thing is for sure. We are going to be living in interesting times.

PAUL LAXTON

Funerals-Something You Might Not Want To Think About-But Really Should.

In this country death and dying is a subject matter that tends not to be discussed openly, although our health is the subject of everyday conversation. As a consequence the vast majority of people die without ever discussing their wishes for what should happen to them after they are gone, and just as importantly considering how their funeral is to be paid for.

I have to hold my hands up and admit that I had never seriously considered what I wanted to happen to me when I died, although I had mentioned to my family that I am in favour of cremation rather than burial, but beyond this, discussion on the subject whilst not strictly taboo, was nevertheless not something that was touched upon very much at all.

A number of things happened to change this; Firstly my mother passing away, and in having to arrange her funeral I realised how much easier it would have been had we discussed her wishes before she died. The second thing was taking a part time job working for a Funeral Directors and actually getting an insight into how, at what is already a difficult time, the stress and upset can be increased for people by the fact that they are organising something that they know nothing about, either as a process, or with regard to the wishes of the person who has died. Finally, having a heart attack myself made me realise that death has a nasty habit of getting you when you least expect it, and does not always give you time to plan, or to make your wishes known to your loved ones. It missed me this time, I may not be so lucky the next time.

As an association whose membership are all retired, and therefore “of a certain age” the subject of death is something that comes up every time we meet, either in committee or in more informal settings, but only because someone we know, either as a member or former colleague, will have passed since the last time we met. I was struck by this when at the last AGM in June I was asked to read out the list of those who had passed away in the previous year, before we held a minutes silence. It lead me to thinking that a article in the Newsletter on the subject of the processes and procedures associated with someone dying, and funeral arrangement, could be something that members would find useful, whether it is or not I will leave to you to decide.

In the first instance I would like to look at the procedures involved when someone dies. As you would expect in a country driven by bureaucracy, there is a lot of official processes and procedures to go through, and depending on whether you are opting for burial or cremation the processes will vary slightly.

If a person dies, who is expected to do so, either because they are suffering from a life threatening illness, or they are of an age and condition that death can be expected, then a Medical Cause of Death certificate will be issued, usually by the doctor treating them, or their GP. Many people think of this as the “Death Certificate” but that document actually comes later when the death is registered, and is actually called, a Certified Copy of an Entry in the Death Register.

If the person has passed away in hospital they will be transferred to the hospital mortuary and will remain there until such time as the family make arrangements with a Funeral Director, after which they will then be moved to the Funeral Directors premises. If the person passes away at home, or in a nursing/care home, and the cause of death has been certified by a doctor or healthcare professional as being due to a medical condition,, then it is for the family, (in the case of death at home) or the nursing home, to make contact with a Funeral Directors to arrange for the deceased to be moved.

So already at this stage there are decisions to be made, which Funeral Directors are you going to use, where would you like the deceased to be taken etc. This process can be much less stressful if you have already decided which Funeral Directors you are intending to use, and this is particularly

relevant if death occurs in a nursing/care home, as the staff there need to know your, or your family's wishes, as they may very well have to make contact with a Funeral Directors themselves if they are unable to consult with next of kin.

You also need to be aware that at this point the cost of a funeral begins, as the Funeral Directors will make a charge for removing the deceased into their care, on average this is about £190. If the deceased is in a hospital mortuary Funeral Directors will be unable to move the deceased until the person who is going to be responsible for organising the funeral has signed a transfer authorisation.

If someone dies suddenly or unexpectedly, irrespective of where they are at the time, there is a legal requirement for The Coroner to be informed and from that point all decisions regarding what happens next rest with the Coroner's Office. This also applies in cases where someone is old and/or unwell and may be expected to die, but has not been seen by their GP within 2 weeks. The Coroner has a number of available options but in the first instance, unless the deceased is in hospital, they will contact Funeral Directors and direct them to remove the deceased to their premises to await further instructions. This removal is paid for by the Coroner's Office. Depending on circumstances the Coroner may require a Post Mortem to be carried out and in such cases the Coroner's Office will liaise with the Funeral Directors to organise this, and again bear all associated costs.

If the death has been reported to the Coroner, and they have decided to investigate the circumstances, then once their investigation is completed they will issue the relevant documentation either to the next of kin, or directly to the Registrar, depending on the circumstances, and the Coroner will either inform the family that they can now proceed with registration as normal, or provide advice and information on what to do next. Alternatively the Coroner may decide that they have no further interest in the case and will pass it back to the GP, or the hospital to deal with in the normal way.

Once a Medical Cause of Death Certificate, or documentation from the Coroner has been issued, then the death can be registered with the relevant Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths. In normal circumstances a death should be registered within 5 days, at the Registry Office that covers the place where death has occurred. Most Registrars offices run an appointment system for this purpose and the process takes about 30/40 minutes. At the end of the process the registrar will issue all the relevant documentation required to both organise a funeral, and arrange for things such as Probate.

To register a death you will need to take with you items such as; the Medical Cause of Death Certificate, or any documentation issued by the Coroner. You should also take the deceased persons:

- birth certificate
- Council Tax bill
- driving licence
- marriage or civil partnership certificate
- NHS medical card
- passport
- proof of address (eg utility bill)

You will need to be able to tell the registrar:

- the person's full name at the time of death
- any names previously used, eg maiden name
- the person's date and place of birth
- their last address
- their occupation
- the full name, date of birth and occupation of a surviving or late spouse or civil partner
- whether they were getting a State Pension or any other benefits

You should also take supporting documents that show your name and address (eg a utility bill) but you can still register a death without them. Once you have registered the death you are then in possession of all you need to proceed with the funeral arrangements.

Once the deceased is in the care of the Funeral Directors they will then wait to be contacted by the person who is going to be responsible for making the arrangements, or after a suitable period, they will contact the person who they have been informed is next of kin, or whoever will be making the arrangements. If death has occurred in hospital then normally next of kin, or the responsible person, will contact the Funeral Directors and will be required to sign a release form giving the Funeral Directors authority to remove the deceased into their care.

You should be aware that if you instruct Funeral Directors to undertake the arrangements on your behalf you are entering into a contract and the person signing the paperwork will ultimately be responsible for settling the account. You may be required to pay a deposit either at the time of signing, or within a few days of this. This is often at least 50% of the funeral cost.

Funeral costs can be split into two separate amounts with regard to how they are determined. The first set of costs are often shown on the funeral account as “disbursements”. These are costs paid by the Funeral Directors to third parties for services provided. These include crematorium or church charges, ministers fees, cemetery fees, newspaper announcements, flowers and the cost of printing Orders of Service.

In the case of cremations these costs also include a doctors fee for signing the required Statutory Documentation. It is a legal requirement that before a cremation can take place, in cases where the Coroner is not involved, two doctors have to sign to certify that they are satisfied that the person to be cremated is the correct person and that there are no other circumstances connected to the death other than what has been entered on the Medical Cause of Death Certificate. The first doctor to sign is the GP, or the doctor who last saw the person when they were alive, and the second is an independent doctor who is required to examine the deceased before signing. Each doctor is paid £84 for this role, and the total cost of £168 is paid by the Funeral Directors, to be charged later to the person organising and paying for the funeral.

The second set of costs are from the Funeral Directors and come under the general heading of “Funeral Directors Standard Charges”. These costs include any fees for removing the deceased from the place of death together with the cost of a coffin, hearse, limousine, the services of a Funeral Director and bearers. Also under this heading is the care and preparation of the deceased which includes all the work required in dressing the deceased, preparation for the funeral, and making sure that family and friends are able to view the deceased in the Chapel of Rest. Most Funeral Directors offer an embalming service but this is usually at an extra cost.

With regard to the cost of a funeral, any Funeral Directors who are members of the National Association of Funeral Directors, are required to offer a basic funeral service as part of the NAFD Code of Practice at a cost currently set at about £1250. For this you get a very basic cremation, a basic coffin with just a hearse to take the deceased directly to the crematorium, no choice of time for the service and limited availability for viewing.

The maximum amount you can pay for a funeral is almost unlimited but at the moment the average cost is between £2500 and £3000. This amount matches the £3000 paid by the PGA to dependants when a serving member dies.

Nowadays there is no such thing as the “Paupers Grave” of the past but there are mechanisms in place to ensure that if someone dies, and there is no family to take care of the funeral arrangements,

the local authorities will eventually step in and arrange with a Funeral Director for a simple cremation to take place. It is often believed, (incorrectly) that if the deceased had no means to pay for a funeral, or was on state benefits, then the state will pay for the funeral. This is not the case as the state, in the form of the Department for Work and Pensions, (DWP) will only provide assistance if the person who is organising the funeral is themselves on any “Means Tested Benefit”, and only then if they are satisfied that there are no other family members with the means to pay for a funeral.

In planning a funeral there are many choices available and a Funeral Director will talk you through the options, indicating prices as you go along. It is important to remember that the Funeral Director is there to assist you and there is no need to feel the need to spend more than you actually want to, especially because you do not wish to appear to be “penny pinching” at what is a difficult time. As an example there is little point in paying for anything other than a basic coffin if it is for a cremation. It is important to not allow yourself to be talked into anything you do not want, (a truly professional Funeral Director would not do this) and of course this is where it helps to have discussed these matters with the deceased before the event, so that you know exactly what it is that they wanted.

A good way to ensure that you and your family know exactly what it is that you, and they, want for your funeral is to discuss the issue with them at the earliest opportunity. In that way if you were to pass suddenly, or were so ill that you were not able to discuss the matter with them, they will know what your wishes are. If you have also made this clear in your will so much the better, but remember that wills are often not read until after the funeral, so do not include anything in your will, with regard to funeral arrangements, that you have not already discussed with family, or friends.

An even better way to ensure that you get exactly what you want with regard to funeral arrangements is to invest in a Funeral Bond. As with any service that you purchase there are some providers of Funeral Bonds who offer a better service than others. When deciding on who to deal with in purchasing a bond one of the most important things to look for is a guarantee that the price that you pay for your bond today, assuming it is paid in full, will cover the full cost of the funeral that you have planned, however far in the future it may be before you need that service.

Many of the funeral bonds available on the market are based on the payment of a fixed amount in the event of death occurring, very similar to an insurance policy. There are a number of problems with this, not least the fact that it may be that the sum insured will not actually cover all the funeral costs, if these costs have risen above the figure that your policy was set to pay. In addition these companies do not actually arrange your funeral and as a consequence your family will still need to find, and retain a Funeral Director to make the arrangements. Remember as well that claiming against insurance policies in the event of death can often involve the Probate process, which can delay payment.

The best Funeral Bonds are those offered by large and reputable firms of Funeral Directors, and which are underwritten by an insurance policy that guarantees that on your death the funeral that you have planned will be paid for, irrespective of how much costs may have increased in the period since the bond was originally purchased. In addition the insurance element of the bond gives you protection should the Funeral Directors cease to trade.

When you invest in a bond of this type you are dealing directly with the Funeral Directors who will eventually arrange your funeral, and in effect you are sitting down with a trained professional, planning, and costing, your own funeral. This allows you, and your family to decide exactly what it is that you want, and to be assured that come the time this is exactly what you will get, and because the Funeral Directors will also know exactly what your wishes were the process of arranging your funeral becomes so much easier for all concerned.

At the end of the process all the things that you have asked for are priced so that you know the total cost of your funeral. Depending on the company you are dealing with you can then either pay the whole cost there and then, or pay by instalments. The better providers of Funeral Bonds may offer interest free credit over a limited period, or a longer period to pay but with interest charges added. Whichever payment method you choose you are fully covered from the time that the bond is fully paid up. If you should pass before the bond is fully paid then you would still get the funeral you had planned and any payments that have been made would be deducted from the Funeral Directors final invoice.

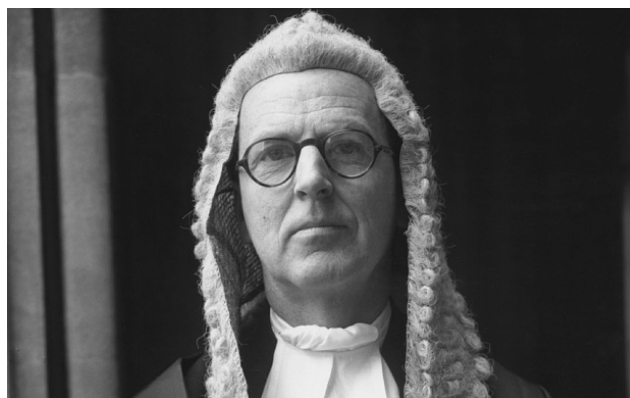
As I said at the beginning of this piece, I now work part time for a firm of Funeral Directors and I have seen for myself firsthand the stress and upset that people suffer when they lose someone dear to them, and they find themselves having to deal with situations and decisions that they were ill prepared for in the first place. This is made all the worse as they are also trying to deal with their grief and sense of loss. I have also seen how pre-planning can be such a great help at these times, and how family and loved ones can concentrate on all the other problems that come with dealing with a death, safe in the knowledge that the funeral arrangements being made are exactly as the deceased wished, and there are no concerns about how it is going to be paid for.

Finally to dispel a myth associated with funerals. On the day of a funeral the coffin is sealed before it leaves the Funeral Directors premises, and for both burial, or cremation, it is never opened again.

I do hope that in reading this you have found it to be useful and informative. My aim has been to produce an article that highlights the value of pre-planning, and to demystify some of the processes and procedures connected with dealing with a bereavement.

Graham Mumby-Croft

When I met Lord Hutchinson



It is rare, in my experience, to meet a Barrister who is interested in what happens in prisons. It was an especial pleasure, therefore, actually to meet the famous advocate, Jeremy Hutchinson, whose wide interests and cultural hinterland included concern about incarceration and its effects. As it was in the House of Lords, he was Lord Hutchinson of Lullington Q.C.

This is how it happened.

I had been Governor of Grendon prison for some 3 years, it was early 1986. Jack Donaldson had been on the first Board of Visitors when Grendon was founded. He has been ennobled and had retired from the B of V but still took a benign interest in our work as well as the broader aspect of penal affairs. That November I attended the A.G.M of NACRO and he wandered up to me and asked me how we were doing.

I described the difficulties we were facing with excessive financial constraint. "Would you like a debate in the House?" he asked. Concealing my delight at such an opportunity, I immediately agreed. So I was an observer in the House of Lords at 5 p.m. the following February.

On the Government bench sat the lonely, inexperienced Lord Glenarthur. Clearly a very junior Minister, his worried demeanour reminded me of Bertie Wooster waiting desperately for help from Jeeves. Instead were a scurry of Home Office

Civil Servants scribbling away in the Box. Facing this isolated grandee was a group of determined heavy weights. Following Lords Donaldson, came Lords Longford and John Hunt- all knew their subject- and a Lord briefed by the POA.

Then Lord Hutchinson rose- tall, straight-backed, formidable, with the voice of the historical attorney, easily commanding the House. Hyperbole came easily- Grendon was "The jewel in the crown", threatened by stupid government meanness. Then came the gentle rain after the storm, the defence plea; nobody could resist, surely, the reasonableness of the argument- agreement was inevitable. The Minister appeared to cringe like a man in an H. M. Bateman cartoon.

However, armed with the notes, he rose to reply. He rambled, then came the faltering action statement. Locked within 7 double negatives and wayward dependant clauses, Grendon would get the money. Fortunately, my 3 years in the Home Office enabled me to disentangle the message but Jeremy Hutchinson, when striding along the labyrinthine corridors of the House, was furious at the rejection- as he saw it.

"No." I pleaded, "We got the money!" He juddered to a halt, turned to face me, eyebrows like semaphores. "We did?" a joyous shout. "Come and have a drink". I was ushered into the nearest bar and a generous whisky thrust into my hands. The conversation was fascinating as others joined us.

Less happy was my subsequent meeting with the loitering Civil Servants and the Regional Director. They were not happy with the defeat and the R.D especially so. He knew he would obtain no extra for his budget, so other prisons would have further cuts to fuel our needs. I was discouraged from repeating this method of survival.

Michael Selby

WHAT DO CRICKET FANS DO IN THE WINTER?

Cricket is seen as a very English sport, with its sense of fair play, and despite the Australians' attempts to taint it in the last 150 years, the first Law of Cricket remains that cricket should be played 'in the spirit of the game.'

Summer days with the sun spotlighting a gleaming white pavilion; tea being served to folks sitting at round tables outside in the picturesque setting of a green pasture somewhere in middle England; the sound of leather on willow and polite clapping with the odd genteel cry of, 'Good shot old boy', and a general surrounding of well-behaved children practising their forward defensive strokes with the bat, being bowled to by their fathers and grandfathers on the grass outside the boundary; mothers working tirelessly looking after children and preparing afternoon tea for the men folk who are playing out in the middle. Victoria sponges, chocolate éclairs, vanilla custards, scones and jam along with lashings of tea are prepared for the tea interval. A veritable rural idyll is painted, and there are plenty of paintings which depict this scene.

There are still places in England where this ritual carries on. If you visit New Road at Worcester for a game, there is a tea of similar proportions served in the Ladies Pavilion at quarter to four every match day afternoon. The cakes are all homemade (or were up until a few years ago) and the quality of the fare on offer can be judged by the queues that form an hour before the pavilion opens for service. To some who visit Worcester, this is their sole objective; and they are willing to sacrifice an hour of cricket watching to ensure their place in that queue.

But, as we all know, summer is the shortest season of the year in England; or the weather makes it seem so. But when the sun shines, and you are surrounded by some good company, in my opinion there is no better way to pass a day. The cricket season starts in April and finishes in late September. The worst seasons see us lose 1800 overs in a season because of inclement weather. (There are 96 overs to be bowled in a day so that works out at almost 19 days of Championship cricket out of a possible 64 – between a quarter and a third.) But summers are not always that bad. This year (2015) we have lost less than 100 overs to the weather; and Lancashire County Cricket Club is riding high at the top of the 2nd Division. All is well with the world, although Yorkshire currently occupies the top position in the 1st Division.

When the end of September approaches and the cricket season draws to a close, the bereft feeling that I suppose soccer fans have when their season finishes encompasses the cricket lover [although the football season never seems to finish does it? I remember when the Cup Final was the first Saturday in May and was the last game of the season, but now seems to go on ad infinitum]. True, there are England cricket tours abroad every year, but these are National teams and following them to the sub-continent and the antipodes is expensive and is usually a once-in-a-lifetime experience. So, what to do in the winter?

Well, most County Cricket Clubs have various functions with ex-players as guest speakers but these are usually luncheons and/or dinners that can prove quite expensive and are infrequent in nature. But there is another way to keep up to date with other like-minded souls and that is by joining a Cricket Society. Throughout the United Kingdom there are 33 regional societies and a General

Council [<http://wordpress.councilcricket Societies.com>] The 33 regional Societies cover geographically the length and breadth of the British Isles, from Dorset in the west to Norfolk in the east and from Hampshire in the south to Scotland in the north. So you are never far from one of these and a list of all the Societies can be found on the above website. There will be one near you, and if you are interested, the names and contact details of your local Society can be accessed via the website named above.

So how do these Societies keep the cricket lover in touch with cricket? Well, they invite speakers to their meetings, which usually number seven or eight a year. These speakers vary and they are usually ex-players, umpires, ex-England captains or cricket journalists. Of course the list doesn't stop there and there are commentators and well known celebrities whose great hobby is cricket, Sir Tim Rice for example, and they will attend for a small fee and talk to the assembled throng and take questions afterwards. Most of the speakers are amusing; some are tremendously knowledgeable about the game and most have amusing anecdotes from inside the camp to share. This gives the listener a glimpse of what it is like from their perspective, as opposed to the perspective of the humble spectator, of which the audience is usually made up. Current players and coaches will speak and most will be refreshingly honest about the state of the game and their own views on the short [one day cricket (50 overs a side) and the Twenty-twenty (20 overs per side) limited over cricket] as well as the international fixture list and the state of English cricket in general. It also allows us to meet up with old friends with whom we watch cricket in the summer, and, were it not for these meetings, would not socialise with until the beginning of the next season.



A picture of T20 Finals Day 2014 at Edgbaston Cricket Ground Birmingham. Lancashire lost in the final to Birmingham Bears on the last ball of the match. They went one better in 2015 at the same stadium to beat Northants.

Cricket, like any other sport, has its' detractors both from without and within. The picture above was taken at last year's T20 finals day, where two semi-finals and the final take place on the same day. To me it is a great day out and the equivalent of a countryside summer fete where everything is taken light-heartedly and a win is a bonus. The main aim of the day is enjoyment, and if your team gets knocked out in the first game then you can concentrate a bit more on the drinking and a little less on the cricket from that point on. But there are those to whom this form of cricket is an abomination; cricket played in pyjamas (coloured clothing) and music, loud music, played whenever a six is hit or there is a break in the game; and even the County mascots [Lancashire's is a giraffe called 'Lanky'] having a steeplechase race in the break between the second semi-final and the final.