

American Express Retirees Club



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Website: www.theretirees.co.uk
Contact the Editor
E-mail: Richard@theretirees.co.uk
Subject: Amex Retirees

Newsletter – Q1 – 2024

Editor's Welcome

Here we are again folks ! This newsletter is a bitter-sweet one for me. Sad loss of close friends but cheering insights from our own 'centenarian.' We have contributing articles from a Brighton FC Ambassador and our French ambassador, Hazel.

My role as editor is to keep colleagues informed of events that may be of interest and I will strive to continue to do that. Our 'sister-ships,' the e-newsletter and the Facebook group are amazing publications and I hope you can get access to them.

My pre-Christmas shock was to be caught for the first time by the dreaded 'Covid,' even though I have had 7 vaccinations. Unfortunately, it struck one day before my wife's birthday and so we had to cancel various celebration plans; then go into isolation mode for ten days - such a pain. Fortunately, my wife did not succumb so 70% of our partnership excelled ! Thankfully, our family was able to spend a loving and fun new year in Prague and I know we are more fortunate than many. I would love to hear your stories about such events so that we can share with colleagues.

I came back to be hit by those 'automatic' annual subscriptions that we forget all about and do not use that much. The real skill is to get a refund for the unused subscription, a skill I have not mastered but will strive to get some positive outcomes.

Our illustrious leader, Peter Smith, we provide the new year's honours list but let me just pre-empt by thanking him for his unwavering support to all of us , something he does with energy, despite those personal 'blips' that we all must cope with.

OK, 2024 give us all you've got – we will 'outrun' the bads and 'nourish' the goods.

Chairman's Report

Firstly, a very happy New Year to you all.

For many of us the past year has been a challenging one, with the hangover from Covid still lurking and financial pressures all round. I suspect the New Year will have its equal in challenges with many other political and social upheavals to come.

Individually there is not much we can do except do what we think is the right thing.

At this time of year its traditional to look back over the past year and look forward to the future. From the Clubs point it has been a fairly busy and interesting one, the first half was quiet. However, the second half was busier with a walk in Whitechapel, London for a group of about twenty followed by a visit for about twenty more to a Tea and Coffee importer and roaster and then in November our big event of a Reunion at the Amex Stadium.

With your suggestions and interest hopefully there will be many more events in the future.

The Reunion would not have taken place without John Lias and Chris Belton, their contacts and all the hard work they put in organising and advertising it, so our thanks to them. Chris has also been involved in maintaining the Clubs presence on our website, not an area I and many others know much about.

I would also like to say thank you to two others for helping to support the Club, Duncan Hopper, who regularly submits articles for the eNewsletter about his travels around Sussex and other areas and to Andrew Evzona who keeps us entertained with his topical poetry on Facebook and the eNewsletter.

During the latter part of the year our long serving Treasurer Susan Clay-Joyce decided to withdraw from her role, my personal thanks to her. Hilary Wilson agreed to step into the breach, although as yet we have not been able to hand over things as our bank are updating all their files due to the money laundering regulations and lots of form filling.

As usual our stalwarts of Keith Appleyard, Ann McNorvell, Stephen Clark, and Richard Watkins have continued to support us in their respective roles of Facebook Guardian, (not an easy task, I have seen some of the replies from people asking to join us), eNewsletter.editors, when they interrupt their travels as twitchers, usually accompanied by a stuffed toy and ruck sack and of course, Quarterly Newsletter Editor when Richard's not watching West Ham or on his European travels.

Many thanks to all of them and long may they continue to support the Club.

For myself, I have been involved in trying to update the Club's Constitution and its banking arrangements so that it is in good shape for the future as the Club's role has changed a bit over the recent years. Previously it was just a focal point Retirees but due to reductions in the frequency of communication and the loss of a regular place to meet, we have embraced other ideas like the website, Facebook and the eNewsletter. This tends to involve many more people other than Retirees so our approach to things has had to evolve and change.

Unfortunately, I am not getting any younger and at my age I need to recognise that perhaps it might be wise to find someone else to take over the role of Chair. If anyone out there is interested, please contact me, I would be happy to talk about it?

Just a few warnings, there are no set hours, the pay is lousy at zero but the rewards although few are well worth it.

I know that financially things are difficult all round and this is not a particularly suitable time to ask for donations, is there ever a good time ,but the Retirees Club would welcome any donations, to help with running the Club. Our main ongoing expense is the Website which is free to everyone and helps us to promote the Club, from time to time we may make small donations to members events.

We take good care of the Club's money and have no other sources of income as everything we provide is free to all members.

If you wish to donate, please do this by BACS using the following details and adding your name as a reference. If you email us at the same time with your details, we will acknowledge your support by email. Thank you.

Payee: American Express Retirees Club Bank: Barclays Bank Sort Code: 202062 Account: 53725146

Obituaries

Mr Ian Gibson, on 24 August 2023 who lived in Inverness and was in receipt of a spouse's pension in respect of his late wife, Penelope's membership of the Plan.

Mrs Angela Rose Cook, on 4 September 2023 who lived in Malaga, Spain and was in receipt of a pension for herself and a spouse's pension in respect of her late husband, Alfred's membership of the Plan.

Mr Anthony Peter Malan on 12 September 2023 who lived in Hythe, Kent and was married.

Mrs Sheila Mary Wintle, on 16 September 2023, who was single and lived in Hove.

Stephen Madajewski on 19 September 2023 who lived in Roundham, Norwich and leaves a spouse, Jenny.

Ms Sandra Chamberlain on 30 September 2023 who lived in Peacehaven.

Patricia Jane James, on 3 October 2023, who lived in Cambridge, and was a widow.

Mrs Pamela Kirby, on 17 October 2023, who lived in Studley, Warwickshire and was a widow.

Mr Thomas Walter Harper, on 21 October 2023, who was single and lived in Eastbourne.

Mr David Wallace Griffiths, on 25 October 2023, who lived in Bonneuil-Matours, France and leaves a spouse, Michele.

Pamela Gillette Wilson, on 2 November 2023, who was single and lived in Woodburn Green, High Wycombe.

Paul James Rudd on 13 November 2023, who lived in Hartlepool and leaves a spouse, Buschra.

Mrs Jacqueline Cole, on 14 November 2023, who lived in Brighton.

Mr Faramarz Kiai, on 15 November 2023, who lived in Peacehaven and leaves a spouse, Maria.

Mrs Ann Rosemary Stevenson on 29 November 2023 who lived in Brighton and was single.

Mr Brian Edric Gunn on 27 November 2023 who lived in Burgess Hill and leaves a spouse, Christine.

Mr Anthony Leonard Whiting on 2 December 2023 who lived in Portugal and was in receipt of a spouse's pension in respect of his late wife, Brenda's membership of the Plan.

Jacqui Cole (Ann Webster)

I am very sad to tell you of the death of Jacqui Cole on 14 November at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton. Jacqui was very proud of the time she spent working at American Express and always grateful for the very kind treatment she and her husband Julian received from the company following his illness.

These are words from the notice of her death printed in The Argus:

A proud Northerner, Jacqui was a wonderful wife to Julian, a warm and funny friend to everyone at New Larchwood and many beyond, a valued colleague at American Express, a passionate advocate for animal welfare and a devoted companion to her beautiful cat, Chloe. She was loved and respected and will be much missed.

Dave Griffiths (Editor)

Our 'love' story starts in 1976. Diana and I were new into Brighton and to American Express, with four- and six-year-old kids, when the DWG 'positivity blanket' hit us. Yes, Withdean stadium every weekend; 'let the kids do some running and then use their bikes- you and Diana run round the track with the rest of us – 100-meter dashes, slow jogs, etc, etc'. In 1977 our family joined the Amex team to take-on the Hyde Park 'fun' run, something that continued to 1981. Then there were the half marathons ! Not only! - DWG 'invited' me regularly to his testosterone gym next to King Alfred pool. Sweaty bodies lifting outrageous free weights whilst I covered in the corner awaiting my allotted time to remove most of the weights from the bar to do my bit !

Little did I know just how influential DWG would continue to be in our family's life and my business career.

The immediate Facebook outpouring of sympathy, thanks, recognition, respect, testimonials further give witness to the part that DWG played in those heady Amex days.

DWG was a service disciple and defined the customer as the centre of the universe, but recognized that professionally trained, confident, supported staff, having proper systems and procedures were the key ingredients to making excellence the Amexco 'raison d'être' .

A Canadian, with a European heart, DWG led his followers to spread the word and actions all over the Amex EMEA world.

A passion for excellence was matched by a passion for making life fun and healthy ! His reward was to see others succeeding. If people did their best, then that worked for DWG.

One night a dedicated UK team found comfort in doing a three-legged race, after midnight, along 'Montmartre' in Northern Paris, having been entertained by a blind pianist, an eighty-year-old ex-Moulin Rouge dancer, and a deaf drummer ! and more than adequate local brew !! (who remembers Maggie Brighton and Steve Moss – the winners that night !!).

He was an accomplished musician and I remember being blown away by the Griffiths quartet with his children Gareth and Stef, and Michele. Such special times.

In the early nineties I followed him to the then Midland Bank (at the same time as the take-over by HSBC). A 'clash' between the titans of Asia and Europe – Asia won ! He was responsible for the whole card business and attempted to take the customer excellence spirit into the heart of a failing high street bank culture, stuck in the days of greatness. Miracles were performed.

My story relaunches in 2019 when I rediscovered DWG during his retirement, this time in Poitiers, a nice city in western France.

He was a regular golfer and would be participating in local club tournaments , still always trying to do things better. Shopkeepers and shoppers alike all knew him and shared smiles and jokes. His music, pipe and free-weights were conveniently located in his home. We drank wine and reminisced ; proudly sharing the life stories of our children and their children. I think his mind was at rest and that he must have been proud of what he had achieved and knowing that he had touched so many lives in such a positive way.

He passed away this week, in his sleep at hospital in Poitiers, having had health issues for a few months. His immediate family (Michele, Gareth, Steph, and one grandson from each of his children) will be at the cremation, in Poitiers, on 30th October 2023. He will be fondly remembered by so many people that his energy and compassion had touched over so many years.

Life's Lessons (Andy Rolling)

I attended the Amex Reunion recently and was incredibly lucky to meet-up with Andy. In a very dignified way, he provided the very noisy gathering with some 'pearls of wisdom.' Despite the noise and basic ...system, he persevered. Being the true gentleman that he is, he also stayed with us and shared snacks – despite suffering from a sore throat.

My first observation about life was when I was 11 years old and I realised how hard mum and dad had to work to bring up my brother and myself, so to help out we were given household chores to help mum, and garden and allotment duties to help dad. With my love of football embedded in my life, the time had now come when I realised I needed my first pair of football boots. The answer was, 'you need to get a job' !!

I didn't take that in a negative way, but on my journey in life it was mum and dad's way of giving me a work ethic and if you want something that much you've got to be prepared to work for it!

My love for football grew and I was fortunate enough to be offered an apprenticeship at Norwich City FC. I was standing on the platform of Bristol railway station, saying goodbye to mum and dad at the age of fifteen.

My dad offered some farewell wishes to take with me....

1. When somebody older than you talks to you, listen, because you will learn something.
2. You only get out of life what you put into it.
3. There's two words that you never want to say to yourself....

"What's that dad?", "If Only"

and to this day, I've kept that in mind and they have been instrumental in making a lot of decisions.

My football journey continued with a 3 year apprenticeship and hopefully a professional contract would be offered to me at the end of this period.

During those 3 years I did everything and more that the coaches and ground staff told me to do. If I had not followed these instructions I'm sure the words of wisdom..."If Only" would have come back to haunt me.

I do believe this gave me the opportunity to secure a professional contract.

Brian Clough was the manager at Brighton and signed me in 1974, telling me it was the best thing I had done, and without doubt it was the best decision I made in my footballing career.

My playing career under Brian Clough was short lived as he resigned as manager two weeks after signing me.

Moving forward, I had six great seasons at Brighton and Hove Albion...the last four under Alan Mullery which were the best in my career, securing promotions from the old 3rd division to what is now the Premiership.

While I was on the final part of my journey in football, which meant working my way down through the divisions, I found myself playing in the Sussex County league at the age of 42....apart from fulfilling my desire to play as long as I could, I loved the game so much I didn't want to stop.

It also gave me the opportunity to pass on all the experience I had gained throughout the years to my younger team mates who were starting out on their journey into football.

Hoping the impact of Dads words would leave a lasting impression on them as it did with me..."When somebody older than you talks to you....listen because you will learn something"

Finally, when I was asked if I would like the opportunity to be part of the hospitality team at the Amex stadium, there was never any chance of an "If Only" moment here, I said Yes without giving it a second thought, and here I am twelve years on loving every minute of my time at the Amex, watching an incredible team play fantastic football and the chance to catch up with so many supporters, young and old. Best Wishes. Andy Rollings

(Wikipedia summary : '**Andrew Nicholas Rollings** (born 14 December 1954) is an English retired professional [footballer](#), best remembered for his six years as a [centre back](#) in the [Football League](#) with [Brighton & Hove Albion](#). He also played League football for [Portsmouth](#), [Swindon Town](#), [Norwich City](#), [Torquay United](#) and [Brentford](#). In the mid-1980s, Rollings opened the [Chalet Cafe](#) in [Preston Park, Brighton](#), with his wife, [Judy](#), which continues successfully to serve visitors to Brighton)

Our 100 year's young, Elsie Butler (editor)

I had the privilege of sharing part of Elsie's birthday celebrations, together with a room full of family and friends. Elsie was smiling and sipping champagne whilst being hugged by those around her that clearly love her so much.

I explained to Elsie that her colleagues want to know some of her secrets and thoughts about her life. Coincidentally, our grandson had sent us a questionnaire from his school. It was part of his science homework and was 'an interview with someone over the age of sixty'. Elsie does fit into that category !!

Thanks to Tracey & Bob for being the interviewers and reporters. Elsie's view !

1.What sports or activities did you like to do when you were younger ? *Tennis, Hockey & Swimming-continued with swimming into my early eighties, at King Alfred, mostly. Do not do any of these now. I have less energy and my mobility is restricted. I do chair yoga though, in the care home.*

2. What do you enjoy spending the time with now ? *My family*

3. Are you the tallest you've been in your life now ? *No, I'm shrinking 😊*

4. Do you remember things now like when you were younger ? *Memory is worse*

5.Do you need to go to the doctor more now that you are older ? *Not really but I'm frail and it means I see the Dr more often..but I'm still very healthy.*

6.What do you enjoy about being older ? *the wisdom I've gained, good friendships..doing crosswords & wordsearch*

7.When has been the favourite stage of your life ? *The 1970s & Travelling and holidays with my family*

8.What is your biggest life lesson ? *being happy, encouraging happiness, appreciating life, keeping your mind occupied*

Elsie looked amazing and still had that twinkle in her eye ! She has such a warm personality and is clearly admired by all those around her.

Big thanks to Elsie(Editor)

What do you think ? (editor)

I am a West Ham supporter (groan, groan) and have invested in an annual season ticket. I enjoy my trips to London Stadium, and it gives my wife some peace as well. As you know, I am also passionate about helping displaced people and am the trustee of www.freedom-id.com, a charity organisation providing free digital verification to make things safer for those in need.

Since March 2022, when the Ukraine war started, I have made it a ritual to attend home matches with the Ukrainian flag draped around my shoulders, to show my continued support of that nation. (In late 2022, were also able to get West Ham FC to support a funds appeal, and three of their European players helped with a 'photo-shoot' which we were able to publicise)

At the end of October, before a home match, I was standing near to my allotted seat, chatting with my 'buddies' when two security people arrived. 'You can't wear that flag' they said, 'It's a new policy' You can imagine what response I gave , as did the supporters around me !! But what was I to do ?

I wrote a blog onto the West Ham Supporters Facebook page to see the reaction. It very much followed my line of thinking.

However, one 'blogger' wrote that it was a policy set-up to avoid supporters being tempted to bring Palestinian or Israeli flags into the ground !

You may know that West Ham FC directors include prominent Jewish business people. A coincidence ?

Interestingly, at a recent home game, there was a photo taken then published showing a young girl in the stadium waving a Ghana flag, being embraced by a 'new' WHFC football hero, Mohammed Kudus. Double standards ??

Hazel Crawford, France

So first I would like to let John Edward King know that he is not the only Amex retiree who worked in the travel sector of Amex! I worked in Maidenhead for many years, until I was made redundant. I did the personal travel for the business clients. I loved it. Nothing as good as the feeling that you have advised someone to do something that they had not thought of on the holiday and have then come back to thank you .

So, to return to my life in Provence.

I am so lucky to have two pairs of lovely French neighbours who help me in all sorts of ways. One helps me in the garden, and her husband is my 'go to,' to open cans with one finger; I cannot do that! He also turns off my fire alarms for me, and change the battery, as I cannot reach that high !.

The lady next door to them looks after my cat when I go away and looked after him for almost six weeks when I had my left knee replaced. Her husband does not speak any English other than the basics, but we get by with speaking into Google in alternate language. My French speaking is OK, but I still struggle to understand what is being said to me as I cannot deal with the verb conjugations! I still go to French lessons every week, although to be fair we have fun and chatter. We are currently (three of us) reading aloud the French version of a year in Provence a paragraph each at a time, then comparing it to the English version. Often vastly different!! We are also good friends so enjoy drinking coffee and laughing; two French ladies and us three.

I am still able to travel and spent six nights in Las Vegas in June, with friends, to see Barry Manilow and help celebrate his 80th birthday. He still sounds great, and we have accepted his assorted face lifts and Botox,(but wish he had not done it and just grew old like the rest of us), but he is still our Barry! It was also great wandering around again and seeing all the changes and new hotels.

Since then, I have just returned from four nights in London, seeing the Panto at the Palladium which a small group of us see every year - rolling in the isles laughing; then on to see Donny Osmond in the evening, with more friends.(He is now 66, but still sings just as he always has, and is still very funny.) Next day lunch and Moulin Rouge at the theatre with two old friends, who used to live near us in Lorgues. Best show I have seen in many a year, with the help of a special ticket, enabling us to sip champagne before the show plus cheese and biscuits, and more champagne in the interval with ice cream. My last night was at the smash-hit musical, Mrs Doubtfire. Incredibly good, apart from the man behind me who guffawed very loudly at every comment! I moved in the interval!!!

I brought home enough Cadburys chocolate to last me some months, as well as M&S extremely chocolaty biscuits, plus mince pies, fondant fancies, hot cross buns, and much more.

I am unpacked and ready for Christmas, when I will be with two friends for the day, back in Lorgues, along with a few other waifs and strays.

By the time this is published I hope you will all have had a great Christmas and wish you all a Happy New Year.

Quiz Time

British Quiz Questions I

1. What is the earliest known name for Great Britain?
2. The Norfolk Black is a British breed of what animal?
3. Which city is eight miles from Southampton?
4. What sort of fruit would you find on top of Heather Phillipson's , 'The End'?
5. Can you name Cornwall's only city?
6. Which British medal carries the words ;'For Gallantry' ?
7. Whose coffin was transported on the London Underground before his state funeral at Westminster Abbey, and, at which the future monarchs Edward VII and George V functioned as pallbearers?
8. Who was the last British king born outside the UK?
9. Which Island off the north-west coast of Wales is the seventh largest in the British Isles?
10. The Shambles with overhanging timber-framed buildings is an old street in which British city?
11. How many Tudor monarchs were there?
12. What is the name of the three chalk stacks that rise out of the sea at the furthest western point of the Isle of Wight?

Maybe Not Forgotten (Graham Dean)

I can quite understand that Mr King thinks that Travel has not been mentioned in the newsletter.

However, I can assure him that it has - my article some time back. I worked in Travel and Military Banking, both initially combined. I also worked in Prestamex House, Brighton, and fleetingly in all UK Travel Offices including in London. I can remember a large staff in Prestamex, including many young lady data key operators, wasn't one of them at one time a Page 3 girl ? I was also part of the TRIPS team, working in Belgium, Switzerland, France, Spain, and South Africa. I started and finished in Amex, in High Wycombe, having visited all Amex UK Military Banking facilities - Holy Loch included!

Dare I mention The National Bank of Fort Sam, Houston ? They briefly replaced Amex in UK Military Banking and took over the High Wycombe Amex base.

It is not only Travel that does not get mentioned. There was also Banking - Cannon Street for example, and I suppose few people know that the High Wycome base also included an Insurance section. I wonder whether the Travellers Cheque division still exists. So, Card division does dominate the newsletter, but that is not surprising, and it does keep things still "alive."

And finally

Mum was watching TV when her daughter came home.

"Hello, Tracey, did you have a good night out with Andy?" she asked.

"Yes" said Tracey "he asked me to marry him."

"That was a surprise" said Mum "What did you say?"

"I said I would let him know, as he does not want to marry in the church. You know he is an Atheist and does not believe in Hell?" replied Tracey angrily.

"Don't worry about that" said mum "Just say yes and then both of us can prove him very wrong."

The arithmetic teacher had written 10.9 on the blackboard and had then rubbed out the decimal point to show the effect of multiplying this number by ten.

"Johnny," the teacher asked, "where is the decimal point now?"

"On the eraser!" came back the reply.

Heard at a buffet party.

Wife to Husband

"That's the fourth time you've gone back for cake and cream, aren't you embarrassed?"

"Why should I?" replied the husband "I told them it's for you."

Quiz Answers

1. Albion 2. Turkey 3. Winchester 4. A cherry (a work of art on display on the Fourth Plinth, Trafalgar Square, since 2020.)
5. Truro 6. George Cross 7. William Gladstone 8. George II 9. Anglesey 10. York 11. Five (Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I) 12. The Needles

PENSION ADMINISTRATION - PLEASE NOTE THE ADDRESS BELOW

Contact address for retiree's, relatives & Opt-Out Policy

The Retiree Club **does not** keep any records; you need to use the contact details shown immediately below.

To reduce any delay; All change of address requests and, matters pertaining to the distribution of the Newsletter or any other items pertinent to a pension payment must quote a roll number, an authorized signature is required, and be referred to.

American Express UK Pension Plan, Buck, PO Box 319, Mitcheldean, GL149BF

Helpline 0330 123 9584. Non-UK Residents +44 1179 101100. Or e-mail: amexadmin@buck.com

WE REGRET THAT THE RETIREES CLUB IS NOT ABLE TO DO THIS FOR YOU.

Retirees Club Committee - Contact Details

Chairman: Peter Smith

e-mail: Chairman@theretirees.co.uk

Tel: 07780 901696

E Newsletter Editor: Ann McNorvell

e-mail: Ann@theretirees.co.uk

Tel:

Newsletter Editor: Richard Watkins

e-mail: Richard@theretirees.co.uk

Tel: +447502516408

Website: www.theretirees.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/AmericanExpressRetirees

Events

TBA

Newsletters



Monthly eNewsletter by email, items only; please email the Editor Ann McNorvell at address above.

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Quarterly Newsletter items only; please email the Editor Richard Watkins at the address above.

NEW RETIREES ONLY - If you are recently retired and seeing this Newsletter for the first time – welcome to The Retirees Club. You are invited to attend any of our events and this invitation is extended to your guests. Details of our events together with all other Retiree news can be found on our website www.theretirees.co.uk. Where you can also sign up for the monthly eNewsletter. **PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU MUST OPT IN IF WISH TO RECEIVE A COPY** after receiving your first copy.



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Many Club Members post their comments on the Club and on current events. You too can participate; all you need to do is to register with one of the administrators on the site. Membership is for anyone who is a current, past employee or who has past connection with American Express. **Please join us on Facebook!**

