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Newsletter – Q2 – 2023

Dedicated to the memory of Brian Vernon

Editor's Welcome

Since our last newsletter Ukraine has marked the end of the first year of war, with little hope of peace in the near future. At www.freedom-id.com we have launched a digital verification solution, free to users, aimed at reducing the risk to those caught-up in the terrible situation. Thankfully, the world has not forgotten Ukraine, but there will be many more horrors to have to endure.

At home, this publication is focussed on paying respects to Brian Vernon, a giving person, who dedicated much of his time to helping others - a special man. I only have distant memories of meeting with Brian but Peter Smith will be sharing his thoughts on our behalf in this newsletter.

As usual, I close with a gentle reminder that this is your publication; for you to share your thoughts and memories. It only takes a minute to put pen to paper, but will bring many accumulated hours of interest to you fellow colleagues and readers.

Enjoy the summer. We will; having just relocated to Grand Avenue in Hove and so are beginning to enjoy the benefits of this fantastic town and all its wonderful facilities. More of that to come !!

Chairman's Report

Once again time has overtaken me, you would think that being Retired and having three months' notice would be sufficient but no, I'm just on the deadline for this month.

I've had to discard one or two things for the time being, hoping they can be resurrected in later Newsletters, due to a very sad information received in the past couple of days.

OBITUARY

I received a message from Sharon Vernon (known to many of you) to say that her father Brian Vernon had sadly passed away on the 31st March 2023, after suffering a seizure. Brian had been fighting some health issues for a few years so hadn't been out much in recent years and to my shame I hadn't been to see him.

Brian would have been known to many of you from his time at Amex where he started in Plastic Card Operations later to become the CDU. From there he moved over to the Youth Trainee Scheme (YTS), many people who joined AmEx at that time will remember him.

He was one of those larger-than-life characters, who you never forget.

After retirement he joined the Retirees Club (aka The Pioneers) where he became the Chairman of the Southern Branch, later the London Branch closed, and Brian took over the Chairmanship of the whole Club until about 2009 when he decided to pass on the reigns to someone else. At this time, I renewed my acquaintanceship with him and took on the Newsletter Editorship, along with Chris Belton as Chairman.

Brian often used to provide articles for the Newsletter all of which were light-hearted, inciteful and entertaining, much like himself in life. He was a great supporter of the Club and used to attend all the meetings with Yvonne his wife, usually with a minor jocular complaint. Amusingly, I remember him 'complaining' that there wasn't enough cheese at the cheese tasting talk and that a Victoria Sponge competition had been won by a sponge with a Union Jack on it, which he felt was bending the rules a bit. We also had a good laugh together when we visited the Scientology centre at East Grinstead when he and I were kept under surveillance by a suspicious security guard.

One of his hobbies was his allotment, taking a keen interest in those days myself we often used have a few rivalries, none of which were successfully, I acknowledge his superior carrots mainly because I didn't grow any. Things became

quite serious when he accepted that my sunflower was taller but suspiciously a storm that weekend flattened mine but left his.

He was also a keen writer having joined a creative writing course and if my memory serves me correctly, he edited a local magazine held in high regard. It was natural that he contributed to our story writing competition, printed later in this Newsletter together with his recollections of Christmas as a child.

Brian sadly departs us leaving his much supported and loved wife Yvonne, daughter Sharon, son Paul and his four grandchildren Madison, Leo, Makenzie and Pixie.

I hope to be able to publish details of the funeral arrangements via our Facebook but will not include exact details for security purposes, you may need to contact me by phone, email, or text me for the specifics.

I'm sure all of you will support me in saying thank you to Brian for his work over many years, his support but mostly for just being Brian a decent honest and much-loved and missed, colleague and friend.

Obituaries

Mr Raymond Theodoulou on 9 March 2023 who lived in Quenington, Gloucestershire and leaves a widow, Elizabeth Knox.

Mrs Eileen Mary Whipps on 7 March 2023 who lived in West Wickham, Kent and was in receipt of a spouse's benefit from her husband Reginald's Plan membership.

Mrs Brenda Jennifer Whiting on 21 February 2023 who lived in Portugal and leaves a spouse, Anthony.

Mr William Watt on 16 February 2023 who lived in Glasgow and leaves a wife, Mary.

Miss Pamela Jill Metzger on 18 January 2023 who was single and lived in Hatfield

Mr Roger Leslie Addison on 3 January 2023 who was single and lived in Shoreham-By-Sea

Mrs Jeanette Elmore on 31 December 2022 who lived in Queensland, Australia and leaves a husband, Peter.

Mrs Marie Terese Evans on 21 December 2022 who was in receipt of a spouses pension in respect of her husband John's Plan membership

Mr Arthur William Davie on 11 December 2022 who lived in Clacton on Sea and leaves a spouse, Hazel.

Mrs Hazel Dorothy Hughes on 9 December 2022 who lived in Brighton

Mr Edward Kelly on 3 December 2022 who lived in Poole and leaves a spouse, Jean

Mrs Freda Thomas on 30 November 2022 who lived in Burgess Hill

Mrs Tessa Mary Crane on 28 November 2022 who resided in Burgess Hill, West Sussex and leaves a husband, Ralph

Mrs Carolina Murdoch on 17 November 2022 who lived in Egremont, Cumbria and leaves a husband, Trevor.

Mrs Ilda Dentith on 9 June 2022 was single and lived in Portugal.

LOST BUT NOT A LOSER (circa Feb 2012 by Brian Vernon)

John glanced up from the comfort of his chair. "Where HAVE you been?" The question was directed to his wife Ann who had been missing for over an hour. "I got lost" she replied looking a little sheepish as she stood there hanging on tightly to two rather heavy looking plastic carrier bags. "How on earth did you manage to do that", he asked. Now you may be surprised at the rather unsympathetic response from John, but sitting as he was, in the lounge on a cross channel ferry, getting lost seemed to him to be rather a difficult thing to do.

As always Ann just had to visit the Duty-Free shop. The ardent shopper in her meant she was bargain seeking and she usually managed to return, eventually, with a bag or two of drink and cigarettes. This always mystified John since neither of them smoked and he had been teetotal for years. The excuse was always the same, "but it was cheap!" The thing that confused him the most was that upon leaving the shop there was only two ways to go. The choice was left or right so why did she always appear to make a wrong turn on the short walk back to the ship's lounge.

Now John was not claiming immunity to losing his way when out and about. However, with good preparation and the use of maps plus a diligent search with Google guaranteed his safe arrival at his destination. The recent acquisition of a Sat Nav system had made it even easier. Besides a visible map a sexy voiced lady advises him where, when and how soon to turn. Even before the arrival of this piece of technical wizardry Ann was convinced that John had an inbuilt compass. He sometimes thought that this was

a back handed compliment and that really Ann was suggesting it was a substitute for a brain.

Nevertheless, he was grateful for this new assistance to getting around as the previous arrangement had a severe drawback. You see Ann would act as navigator in those days. Armed with a map on her lap and opened at the right page one would think everything would be perfect. Wrong!! She would hold the map as one would read a book overlooking the fact that it needed to be set. This meant that unless they happened to be travelling North to start with, they were in trouble straight away. Invitations to

"take the next turning right" would sometimes mean they would travel in completely the opposite direction. Inevitably getting more and more hopelessly lost.

Since those early days John and Ann had thought it through and long since come to a more sensible arrangement. Let's face it everybody has some skills of which they can be justly proud. So now John always does the driving assisted by the Sat Nav which saves a good deal on petrol, while Ann concentrates on shopping for all those bargains. Frankly between them they are saving an absolute fortune.

(I wonder how apocryphal this was, it sounds like Brian to me – Peter Smith)

Brian Vernon – Childhood

A different take again but Brian regaled us with "When I was Six" (see below) by A.A. Milne and read to us one of his articles about life aged 12 on Christmas Day. Following.

When I was One,
I had just begun.
When I was Two,
I was nearly new.
When I was Three
I was hardly me.
When I was Four,
I was not much more.
When I was Five,
I was just alive.
But now I am Six,
I'm as clever as clever,
So, I think I'll be six now for ever and ever.

A FLAVOUR OF CHRISTMAS DAY by Brian Vernon –

"Has he been?" There was a short pause, followed by an exasperated reply from the occupants in the bedroom next door. "No, he hasn't; now go to sleep". I am not sure what time it was when I next awoke, except to say it was still dark. I swung my legs out over the side of the bed and quietly lowered myself onto the mat beside it. In my anxiety to get to the foot of the bed I ignored the icy coldness of the lino on my bare feet.

There it was. Father Christmas had been, and my carefully placed pillow slip was half full. I jumped back up on the bed and turned on the overhead light switch. I explored the content. A colouring book, some crayons, a dinky toy.

Oh, and as usual Santa had included some chocolate money, an orange, and a few sweets but why did he put a pomegranate in each year – they are full of pips.

When next I awoke it was day light. Had it snowed? I went to the window but could not see out as the inside was covered in frozen condensation crystals. A small hole scratched with my fingernail allowed me to see the pavement and verge opposite. It was green grass, so it was not going to be a White Christmas. I quickly dressed, shivering as I put on a cold vest and shirt, and went downstairs. Mother was already busy in the kitchen stuffing a turkey that looked as if it may be too large for the oven. "Go and eat your breakfast in the other room. It is only cornflakes; I don't want you spoiling your appetite before dinner. Then you can keep out of my way, Nanny and Granddad are due here at one o'clock and I have all the vegetables to prepare yet".

I found father in front of the fire in the dining room. He was holding a page from the Daily Telegraph up against the fire surrounds trying to get it to draw, but as it slowly scorched, he had to quickly take it away before it burst into flames. He'd probably have the same trouble when he got to the one in the lounge too, but I said nothing. It was at times like these that it was wiser to say nothing; I just poured the milk on my cornflakes and sat quietly eating them.

From the lounge it was possible to see down a public alleyway to the next street. The grandparents would have a 10-minute walk from the Hounslow West underground station and their early approach could be seen. Their arrival always prompted a little ceremony. They would be greeted at the front door by my father and be ushered into the lounge. Mother would be summoned from the kitchen protesting she had not got the time if you want lunch on time. However, this part of the day always started with a Christmas toast. "What will you have to drink?" father would ask grandma. I just knew it would be the same answer as last year. "Well, I don't know, well alright I'll just have a little drop of whisky". Finally, a glance in my direction "And you?" "I'll have a beer" was my smug reply. Perhaps I should mention that it was a ginger beer, but it felt good just saying it. So then, to the sounds of "Merry Christmas everybody", the beverages were downed, and mother took the opportunity scoot off back to her unfinished tasks in the kitchen.

As half past one approached everyone was invited to the dining table. There was a hatchway between the kitchen and the dining room which was never used except at Christmas time. The dinner began with plates of hot brown Windsor soup being passed through the hatch. I don't really know to this day how Windsor soup is made. For sure it is not a soup I see on the supermarket shelves. Next came the main meal which you already know was turkey. Also, on the plates were stuffing, Brussels sprouts, roast parsnips, and roast potatoes, carrots and peas. This meal was pre-plated in the kitchen before being passed through the hatch.

The process was interjected with enquiries like "Would you like a leg, Sam? And predictable responses by Grandma from within the dining room of "Not too much for me Lily". On the table was also cranberry sauce and English mustard. Yet again we had to listen to the yearly knowledgeable remark from grandfather that "Mr. Colman didn't make his money from what was put on the meat it was from what was left on the side of the plate".

Another little quirk of grandma was to leave something on her plate at the end of the meal. It may be a potato or some turkey. "Too much for you?" mother would enquire. "No, just left a little for manners" came the reply. I feel sure this was a Victorian politeness, but it is lost on me. So, we moved on to the Christmas pudding served with Bird's custard and there was brandy sauce to go with the hot mince pies.

Having satisfied our hunger we all repaired to the lounge where we sat around a big coal fire awaiting three o'clock, which was the signal to switch on the wireless and listen in silence to the King's speech. The end of his stammering words brought an offer to everyone to enjoy "a nice cup of tea". Gratefully accepted and drunk after which at least one of the visitors would drop off for what is euphemistically called forty winks. Shortly after 5 o'clock mother would arrive with plates of various sandwiches and Christmas cake. Here we go, eating again, and of course no meal could be complete without yet another cup of tea. Personally, I do not drink tea, not even to this day, but I did always enjoy a glass of orange squash. By this time, one would think that everybody would be full to bursting, but no, or perhaps that should be "Yes", except that all are too polite to refuse the invitation to return to the dining room for what is described as supper. Supper!? Now that is not a meal we ever ate, but apparently, we do at Christmas. We entered the room to find the table laden with cold ham, cold turkey, sliced cucumber, beetroot, red cabbage, tomatoes, pickles, piccalilli, sweet chutney, cheese and biscuits and even more mince pies.

However, unbelievably, all who were gathered around the table seemed to be able to tuck away yet more food.

It had been a long and tiring day seemingly dominated by eating and drinking. There had been hours of sitting around listening to boring adult conversations, not to mention the King's speech. Worst of all I had not been allowed out to see any of my friends.

Such is the lot of an only child. So, it was somewhat to my surprise, that I found myself almost relieved, to be told that it was time for bed. Apart that is, from then having to trail all around the room in my pyjamas kissing everybody goodnight – YUCK.

Subject: Re: That's Life from Grumpy Olde People

Congratulations....

Ironical... really..... You just manage to read my email re "Grumpy Olde People" and the online Retirees newsletter is sent out with a wonderful section from Peter Smith... Nice and Grumpy...

No, we are not cohorts... but really so funny to read someone else's thoughts on non-factual statements or advertising...

The good thing about television adverts is that one can complain to the Advertising Standards Authority who are supposed to monitor advertisements. Baa Humbug.... they do....?

I (*as you might have guessed*) complained, like many others, about that Quorn advert where they related their products to Beef & Pork etc.... Well they, Quorn, are supposed to be nothing to do with real meat. What they should be highlighting on their adverts & packaging is what their products are really made of..... *Guess that would not be good for them because it would put most people right off...!*

Anyway.... Quorn have replaced their advert, having had a spell of no advertising while they produced a more accurate one - which still does not highlight what their products are made from - unless you read the small print.... *now where did I put that magnifying glass..?*

If only the weather could change - oh to get out into the garden - and dig for victory..... Only just survived the RSPB Bird Watch hour last weekend - it was alright for the birds, with their feathers, but I still felt the cold through 3 layers. Have fun.....Ciao-4-Now ,Czieka19

And Finally

A couple of short stories

I found these two anecdotes in a book I bought on holiday in Tennessee a few years ago and thought the readers might enjoy them.

Bed and board.

Although Tennessee Mountain Folk can be accused of having many strange beliefs, rituals and behaviour one thing they can't be accused of is lacking generosity. I suppose it comes from the harsh life in the past and in order to survive, the need for everyone to help each other.

No family member, friend or stranger was ever denied food drink and hospitality, including a bed for the night. Of course this could be difficult as Mountain Folk tended to have quite large families and often it was necessary for outsiders to share a bed with a family member or in some cases more than one. It wasn't unknown for members of the opposite sex to share a bed.

This is where the bed board comes into its own. Basically, it's a large plank of wood that is placed down the bed to separate the sleepers, with mum and dad sleeping close by this usually seemed to work quite well.

On one occasion the travelling fair was close by, and young Ephraim Oakley decided to visit some distant relatives on the pretence of going to the fair but also with a view to court young Reba May the eldest daughter of Jeb and Mary May.

As was the custom he enjoyed supper with the family and long talks around the open hearth until it was time for bed, the only available bed was a share with the young Reba. So the bed board was placed in the bed and Ephraim after being warned to be on his best behaviour retired to bed obviously on the opposite side of the board to Reba.

It seems the night passed without incident. The next morning a group of the youngsters set off to the fair. Things being quite basic in those days; one of the events was a fence climbing race for the young men. With Ephraim needing to show off in front of Reba, he entered the race.

As the race was about to start young Reba remarked to him quite calmly that if he couldn't find it in himself to climb over the bed board, he surely wouldn't be able to climb over the fences.

I know what you are thinking?

Being in the Tennessee Mountains with numerous rivers and streams it wasn't unusual for there to be many swimming holes around, these were areas where to locals girls and youths would go on hot summer days.

Glen Everett a young adventurer and hunter was returning home one hot summers day and decided to cool off in one of these swimming holes. He stripped off all his clothes, washed them out in the running water and then hung them over some bushes on the bank to dry off. Then taking the opportunity he swam out into the pool diving under the water and swimming as far as he could, after his last dive he came up from under the water and to his horror saw a bunch of young girls on the bank sitting by his clothes, looking at him standing there naked.

Ducking back down under the water he was pleased when his hands came into contact with an old skillet that must have been lost there many years before. Standing up holding the skillet across himself to protect his modesty he said to the eldest girl closest to him.

"It's not what you think" he said

The young girl replied "Mister I don't know what you think I'm thinking..... but I know what you're thinking"

"What's that then?" asked Glen Everett

The girl replied "You're thinking that that skillet has a base in it and that it's not just a rusty rim"

Note attached to the fridge.

To my Dear Wife, you will surely understand that I have certain needs, that with you being 54 years old, you cannot satisfy. I am very happy with you and value as a wife but there are some things I would like to experience once again before it's too late.

Therefore, after reading this note, I hope you will understand if I tell you that I am spending the evening at a hotel with my 18-year-old secretary. I will be home by midnight.

Reply attached to the fridge.

To my Dear Husband, thank you for your honesty but I would like to remind you that you are also 54 years old and I also have certain needs. As you read this note I shall be spending the night at a hotel with one of my students, he is young, virile and like your secretary is also 18 years old. As a successful businessman who has a good head for figures, I am sure you know that 18 goes into 54 many more times than 54 goes into 18. I will see you sometime tomorrow.

Enjoy yourself once.

Here are a few of the recently discovered viruses affecting computers, so beware !

Diet virus: Your 200MB hard drive shrinks to 80MB and then slowly expands back to 200MB.

British Gas virus: It tells you what a great cheap service you are getting.

NPower virus: It keeps telling you that you're paying too much for the British Gas virus.

Politically Correct virus: Never calls itself 'virus', but instead refers to itself as an 'electronic micro-organism'

Arnold Schwarzenegger virus: Terminates and stays resident. I'll be back.

Government Economist virus: Nothing works, but all your diagnostic software says everything is fine.

Local Government virus: Divides your hard disk into hundreds of little units, each of which does practically nothing but all of which claim to be the most important part of your computer.

Gallup virus: 60% of the PCs infected will lose 38% of their data 14 % of the time (plus or minus a 3.5% margin of error).

Adam and Eve virus: Takes a couple of bytes out of your Apple. (PC owners are immune)

House of Commons virus: The computer locks up, screen splits erratically with a message appearing on each half blaming the other side for the problem.

Airline virus: You're in London but your data is in Singapore.

Disaster Appeal virus: Your programs stop every few minutes to ask for money.

Elvis's virus: Your computer gets fat, slow and lazy and then self-destructs only to resurface at a multitude of locations across the screen.

Lord Lucan virus: Your programmes disappear and will never be found again.

Quango virus: Runs every programme on the hard drive, but doesn't allow the user to accomplish anything.

Star Trek virus: Invades your system in places where no virus has gone before.

Private Health Care virus: Tests your system for a day, finds nothing wrong, and sends you a large bill.

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

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

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