

Newsletter – Q4 – 2026

Editor's Welcome

It is now September and already mince pies have started appearing in the supermarkets. The season of goodwill is spreading more each year and if we are not careful, we will have to be nice to each other all year round. Whatever next? Or as the Romans used to say 'O tempora, O mores!' – Oh the times, the habits!

For some years, the Times newspaper has published a Latin crossword every Saturday called 'O Tempora!' – rather a good joke, I think. I believe I'm a typical reader – I start off with the Letters page, read the more interesting obituaries and then wrestle with the cryptic crossword for about an hour. I wonder how many hours I've spent doing the crossword in the last fifty years. About three years of my life, I should think. I tell myself it is good for the brain.

What hobbies do you have? We would love to hear from you.

Below, Ann continues her tales of the Vikings, Peter has a cautionary tale about the effects of nepotism and I've gone back to school...Also, a short quiz and a seasonal recipe.

Chairman's Report – Peter Smith

Again, the past three months have just flown by with the target date for this publication arriving more quickly than anticipated - I think it's an age thing, so a reminder from our Editor was very welcomed.

The Club has had a slightly busy time over the summer with a few events taking place. Unfortunately this publication is not the most convenient method of inviting and informing Club Members, due to the lead times and that its Quarterly. By the time something is set up and advertised it is usually over or close to the date,

As I have encouraged everyone before, the best method to keep up to date, is via our monthly eNewsletter. You can sign up using the entry form on our website www.theretirees.co.uk. It's free and if it's not for you, you can unsubscribe at any time. Or you can join our Facebook page (see further information in this publication). It's a restricted access site - only approved members can see the page or comment and it's generally updated with posts from other members daily.

After close on six months in our new (latest) residence we are beginning to settle in and beginning to discover which bits of the kitchen work ok and which bits don't. I'm pleased I didn't do the reorganisation of the kitchen before we moved in although it's been a struggle without a dishwasher - I hate normal washing up with a passion. The good news is that our new plans involve having one installed, just a slimline but it's a dishwasher which is the most important thing. The oven has gone, no more dinner parties or entertaining thank goodness. It's been replaced by two air fryers and a microwave and what with a new fridge we are nearly there.

Home deliveries of groceries have been a real boon, giving us more time for a coffee and cake and the odd lunch or breakfast out. Don't know how I found time to go out to work - some of my old bosses might think I never did. Not sure about bingo, games night and quiz night in the communal lounge though, not really my scene but at least there is something to do if you want it, along with morning tea and biscuits on Mondays and afternoon tea and cake on Friday. Interspersed with doctors and hospital visits, we are kept busy.

From Ann McNorvell (Editor of the e-newsletter)

From Russia with Love

Why have I named this piece about the Vikings after Ian Fleming's novel (1957) and the 1963 James Bond film from Russia with Love? Perhaps because my acquaintance with James Bond only began through my first serious boyfriend's family, which always rushed out to see the latest film, and his mother was Danish and very proud of her Viking heritage. A bit of a tenuous connection, especially as the Vikings I will be talking about were actually from Sweden. In truth it just sounded like a catchy title 😊.

The Rus were a group of people who gave their name to the countries of Russia and Belarus, and several place names etc. in the region. The origins of the Rus themselves are, however, somewhat disputed.

Traditional Western historians lean towards the theory that the Rus were Vikings from Sweden and part of the same movement as the Varangians, that took their people south and east to the Black Sea, and there founded a state centred on Kyiv. Russian scholars state that the Rus were Slavs and the Kievan state was only briefly attacked and held by the Varangians.

It is a dispute based as much on modern politics as on the interpretation of original sources and we will not resolve it here. However, there is no doubt that the Vikings did reach far into modern Russia and surrounding territories, whether or not they were the origin of the name of the land and its people and founders of the Slavic states.

But the ultimate prize for the Varangian movement south and east was the riches of the Byzantine Empire. Our seamen, soldiers, explorers and traders were always on the lookout for profit. Did they make it to Constantinople? Find out next time, if Jonathan will host more of my ramblings.

P.S. Sean Connery was the only James Bond!

Obituaries

Mrs Adelaide Elizabeth Gray	Mrs Lorraine Marie Bentley	Mr Robert Salusbury Brewis
Mr Colin Clive Le May	Mr Heinrich Scheifinger	Mrs Rita Elizabeth Jayne
Mr Paul Eggo	Mrs Wendy Thelma Parsons	Mrs Carole Ann Witham
Mr John Terence Kelly	Mr David Riddell	Mrs Margaret Valerie Lawn
Mrs Susan Alice Smith	Mrs Renee Jeanne Murtagh	Mr Dennis George Nisbet
Mr Martin Andrew O'Neill	Mrs Heather Rosemary Squires	

From Chris Belton

Brighton Museum and Art Gallery - Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club's 125th anniversary exhibition

Date : Tuesday 24 November

Time : 10:30

Where :Royal Pavilion Gardens, Brighton BN1 1FN

The plan is to meet at the museum at 10.30, have a coffee/tea together at the cafe inside the museum and then explore the exhibition. Once we have finished we can either find a place locally to eat a sandwich or have another hot drink.

Please email The Events team at events@theretirees.co.uk no later than 29 October.

The National Portrait Gallery

Date : Tuesday 15 December

Time : 11:00

If you would like to attend, the cost is £10 per person with friends and relatives welcome. We will be guided through the 10 -15 most popular or famous paintings. To register your interest please email the Events team at events@theretirees.co.uk

A New House

I mentioned in the last newsletter that Karen and I were planning to downsize. Well, the deed is done – we moved house in early August within Pyecombe (a small village about five miles north of Brighton) from Church Lane to School Lane – a distance of about 300 yards.

It is now a week later, and I'm sitting on the patio at eight in the evening after a **very** hot and strenuous day while Karen puts a young grandson to bed. Time to relax and reflect. It has finally cooled to a comfortable temperature and I'm eating a pizza, drinking a glass of red wine and feeling very blessed.

On the horizon to the south east, I can see the hills leading up to Pyecombe Golf Club. Often there are sheep grazing there but its arable at the moment. 100 yards to the west of us is a Norman church - originally known as the Shepherds' Church – built in 1170, the year Thomas Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral. On the other side of the church, there are fine views of the hills towards Saddlescombe where there are cattle. Everywhere there are horses.

Our house, for well over 100 years, was the local school room for the children of Pyecombe and the neighbourhood parishes – Clayton, Newtimber and Poynings, I should guess.

Here is School Lane perhaps a hundred years ago with the school in the middle :



The school closed in the mid-sixties and the house was converted to a dwelling by adding a ceiling, a few stud walls and new wing at the side.



This is now our living room...It looks bigger than it is – it's just that the children are small.

Lots to do between now and Christmas. New kitchen (open plan in the corner of the living room), new bathroom fittings, rewiring throughout. The garden (a bit larger than we would like) has been allowed to get out of control so needs much work. However, this is planned to be our last house so it's worth spending a bit of effort on it now.

Pyecombe is actually two communities. The other part is half a mile away and lies alongside the old London Road that was replaced by the A23 in the early 1980s.

Half a mile to the north is a riding school. From there, you can just make out the remains of a Roman road heading towards the village. Nobody is quite sure where it went after that – Brighton or Portslade maybe.

We are on the South Downs Way and one of our rooms is quite suitable for B&B so we might start doing that next year. We will see...

Unfortunate Effects of Nepotism?

Sadly, passing away in 2020 at the age of 103, Kirk Douglas was one of the world's best known and loved film stars. In his career spanning 1946 until 1990 he was in over 90 films, he was nominated on numerous occasions as Best Actor but never actually won the award, ironically it was his son Michael who did win the award many years later.

Amongst his numerous films one in particular, Spartacus (1960), is probably the one that most fans remember, with the final multiple-crucifixion being one of the most iconic.

Spartacus was one of the real-life leaders of the slave's revolt in Ancient Rome, 73 – 71 BC, which saw insurrection spread across the Roman Empire. Although stylised and romanticised for the screen it probably severely understated the true brutality of the revolt's suppression.

The final fictional scenes were of the multiple crucifixions of the captured slaves (in reality up to 6000 lining the Appian Way) but without the Roman Army being able to specifically identify Spartacus, he had died in battle.

Fictionally, in order to save others from more brutality Spartacus (Kirk Douglas) identifies himself and calls out "I'm Spartacus". One by one in order to confuse the army hundreds of other slaves start to call out "No, I'm Spartacus". The film ends with the confusion.

Inevitably as in many show business families the children of the family use the name as a means of promoting their own careers. As mentioned, the Michael the oldest of four sons went on to be an actor and producer of some renown, two of the other sons Joel and Peter also went into the film business but behind the cameras and became successful producers. The fourth son Eric decided that his talents were best used as a stand-up comedian following his less than stellar attempts to succeed in acting.

One day in 1991, whilst appearing at a comedy venue in the UK, his self-deprecating act as the black sheep of Douglas family went down particularly badly. So much so that he decided to start berating the audience for their inattention and heckling, this ended in him saying "'You can't do this to me, I'm Kirk Douglas's son!"

Everything went quiet until an audience member stood up and shouted out "No, I'm the son of Kirk Douglas", with that another audience member shouts out "No, I'm the son of Kirk Douglas", then another one shouts out and then another and eventually everything turns to confusion just like the film.

Don Ward the club's owner is reported to have said, today Eric Douglas died on his arse
Eric gave up stand-up comedy and sadly died of a drug overdose in 2004.

Film Quiz

Can you identify the films from the quotes below?

1.

Inspector: Tell me Mr. Dyle, where were you at 3:30 a.m.?

Dyle (Cary Grant): In my room. Asleep.

Inspector: And you, Mrs. Lampert?

Mrs. Lampert (Audrey Hepburn): I was too.

Inspector: In Mr. Dyles room...

Mrs. Lampert: No – in my room.

Inspector: Obviously you are telling the truth – for why would you invent such a ridiculous story?

2.

Sir Lancelot Spratt (talking to students): You cut a patient, he bleeds until the processes of nature form a clot and stop it. This interval is known scientifically as the Bleeding Time.

Simon Sparrow hasn't been paying attention...

Spratt: You! What's the Bleeding Time?

Sparrow: Ten past ten, sir.

3.

Compere: Describe your perfect date.

Miss Rhode Island: That's a tough one. [*Thinks*] I'd have to say April 25th because it's not too hot, not too cold. All you need is a light jacket.

4.

Director (*making screen test of Dustin Hoffman playing Dorothy Michaels*): I'd like to make her look a little more attractive. How far can you pull back?

Cameraman: How do you feel about Cleveland?

5.

Sugar Kane: Look at all that silverware!

Joe (pretending to be oil millionaire): Trophies – you know – skeet shooting, dog breeding, water polo...

Sugar: Water Polo? Isn't that terribly dangerous?

Joe: I'll say – I had two ponies drowned under me.

6.

Professor Fate and Max have driven into a central-European town square where a silent and possibly hostile crowd surround their car.

Max: You give them beads. That makes them friendly.

Fate (ignoring him). They obviously don't know who I am. {*stands up and doffs hat*}. I AM PROFESSOR FATE!

The crowd don't react. Fate sits down.

Max: You want to try the beads?

Recipe for a Plum Pudding

The following is from a recipe book kept by my great-great-grandmother. About 1865. I haven't tried it yet...Apparently, plum is an old word for a raisin – there are no modern plums in the recipe.

1 lb breadcrumbs (500g)

¾ lb currants (400g)

¾ lb raisins (400g)

½ lb suet (250g)

½ lb sugar (250g)

2 oz candied peels (60)

2 eggs

1 teaspoonful mixed spice (2g)

2 teaspoonfuls baking powder (10g)

1 tablespoonful flour (10g)

1 teacupful milk (130g)

Well mix the ingredients before adding the milk & boil it for four hours the first day and one hour in warming it when required for use.

Information for Readers

To contact the Pension Administrator :

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Pension Portal : <http://www.buckhrsolutions.co.uk/amex>

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Quarterly Newsletter items only; please email the Editor Jonathan Pontin at the address above.

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