



## **CHAIR'S MESSAGE April 2026**

Welcome to the Sentinel! Keeping you up to date with the news and events of our local u3a, and providing some personal accounts and memories from our members, for us to enjoy. Do keep the date in mind, when reading this edition; Spring is officially here now with April showers and the welcome return of birdsong in our gardens.

**You are invited to join our Special 20th Anniversary Quiz Night, at 7pm on Saturday 25th April in St Peter's Church Hall.** The questions will celebrate our founding year of 2006 and events of the last 20 years. There is a prize for the winning team, so get revising now! There is a £4 entrance charge, and it's a "bring your own food and drinks" event. Tickets are limited, so please contact Mick Gill to book your place using the link below.

<http://balsallcommon.u3asite.uk/Quiz-Night>

## **Notice of Balsall Common u3a Annual General Meeting**

Our AGM will be held at 2pm on Thursday 14th May in St Peter's Church Hall. It will be followed by the monthly meeting featuring a concert by the u3a Big Band.

## **Committee vacancies**

We are looking for volunteers to join the committee. We meet for a couple of hours, 6 times a year, after the monthly meeting at St Peter's Church Hall. If you are one of life's "doers", we need you! Please come and speak to me, or any of the committee members, at the next monthly meeting on Thursday 2nd April if you think you could help.

*Juliet Hancox* **(Chair)**

## **NEWS**

### **1 MEMBERS' MEETING 2<sup>nd</sup> APRIL 2 p.m. St Peter's Hall - Liz Cowley**



At the next Members Meeting our speaker is Ian Malins who is the Search Manager and Trustee of Warwickshire Search and Rescue. Although most people have heard of Mountain Rescue, few have heard of Lowland Rescue. Ian Malins will explain how volunteers help the police search for high risk, vulnerable missing people across Coventry and Warwickshire and will be pleased to answer all of your questions.

## **2 OUT AND ABOUT GROUP – *Karen Harris and Peter Calver***

### **Wednesday 29th April starting at 10:30 am - Chedhams Yard Wellesbourne**

Chedhams Yard is an important example of a once common place aspect of the rural scene -- the traditional village industry of wheelwright and blacksmith. These went into serious decline in the middle of the 20th Century.

**This trip is now fully booked. If you wish to join a waiting list, please contact the Group Coordinator**

### **Friday 22nd May starting at 11:00am - Lord Leycester Hospital Warwick.**

We have arranged a tour of The Lord Leycester Hospital, one of Europe's most important medieval buildings and has been a home to the Master and Brethren for over 450 years.

We will tour the magnificent half-timbered buildings and learn about Warwick's fascinating history from one of the resident 'Brethren'. The tour also includes in the Tudor gardens.

The tour will start at 11:00am and cost £12.00 per person.

Afterwards you can enjoy lunch in The Lord Leycester Great Hall Cafe. There is a range of meals and snacks, including hot and cold drinks while sitting in a medieval banquet hall which once hosted a three-day banquet for King James I in 1617. **(Cost of food paid on the day) If you wish to join this tour please contact the Group Coordinator Please also indicate if you will be staying for lunch.**

**Places for lunch are limited.**



### **Tuesday 30th June Starting at 10:30 - Midland Air Museum**

We have arranged a guided tour of this little known local museum based in Rowley Road, Baginton, Coventry CV3 4FR. The Midland Air Museum as it is today represents many years of dedicated commitment by volunteers and staff who have helped to establish one of the country's leading self-funded independent aviation museums. The museum

boast 30+ complete aircraft on display along with over 200 related objects.

Coventry's rich local aviation history is well represented with a unique collection of Coventry-produced aircraft and engines.

The museum provides an opportunity to experience at first hand the fascinating appeal of historic aircraft. There is a fascinating history of the jet age in the Sir Frank Whittle Jet Heritage Centre, and local aviation history is strongly featured by a 'Wings Over Coventry' gallery.

**The cost of this guided visit is £11.00 each. Free car parking is available on site. If you wish to join this tour please contact the Group Coordinator specifying how many tickets you require.**

### 3 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER CONDEMNS BERKSWELL STATION RAIL BRIDGE

Hs Tu, a professor of structural engineering at Birmingham University, has condemned Berkswell Station rail bridge due to distortion in the rails caused by so many vehicle collisions with it. He said that National Rail had consulted him owing to complaints by first class passengers who had noticed that their tea cups rattled as they passed over the bridge. One passenger had even had his tea spilled over important government papers relating to debating drones in the House of Lords.

**Fast track delivery on the wrong track** (A spokesman for Argos confirmed nobody was hurt in the collision)



Robert Peel, media spokesman for English Rail, sympathised with rail passengers and said the situation had been under review for some time. He said that this bridge was the most crashed into in the country. One suggestion gaining traction was to block the bridge entirely. He pointed out that the bridge had been in place for over one hundred years so they had rights over the space below.

Peel was asked whether a simpler solution would be to dig a deeper hole so as to lower the road. Hs Tu said that this could not be done without an Act of Parliament which was unlikely to pass owing to the conservationist lobby. Even filling the bridge in would be a problem as it was known to be a bat roost and a major thoroughfare for newts migrating to the fishing ponds on the other side of the bridge.

Robert Peel felt the newt problem was easily overcome as English Rail owned the land on either side of the railway. They were already in talks with a view to filling in the ponds to provide a much larger car park for the station. They would then replace the fish ponds so the newts would return after a few years if they weren't annoyed by High Speed trains passing overhead.

When asked how cars would access the new car park if the old bridge space was filled in the English Rail spokesmen said Hs Tu was working on it. Hs Tu said the obvious solution would be to build a bridge over the current bridge that would then dip under the High-Speed Rail bridge that was under construction. He thought this would be quite a simple solution. It would look especially elegant when viewed from above by the High-Speed passengers.

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the sound of a large collision as a white van man smashed his van into the bridge parapet just as the 11.30 a.m. train from Birmingham to Euston passed overhead.

After this harrowing experience Robert Peel was heard to opine that a pint at the nearby Railway Inn would go down well. Hs Tu replied that they'd better get one in quick before pub closed again and the whole station collapsed around their ears. © **Midland Rail News 2026**

#### **4 CURRENT AFFAIRS 2 – *Sylvia Rose***

The Current Affairs 2 continues to meet in the Balsall Common library on the second Monday in each month.

We are only a relatively small group but enjoy our discussions on various news items and local problems. It would be very nice to welcome one or two new members as often some are unable to come. Invariably we are moaning about the closure of roads because of the new HS2 railway!! Subjects we try to avoid are religion and politics.

#### **5 FILM APPRECIATION GROUP - *Kim Hathrell***

##### **Sully: Miracle on the Hudson (PG)**

The next Film Appreciation Group screening at 2pm on Wednesday 8th April will be Sully: Miracle on the Hudson (PG).

On January 15, 2009, flight 1549 left New York City, but shortly after taking off there is an accident that wrecks the plane's engines. The crew are told to return to the airport, but pilot Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger decides that the plane won't make it to the airport, so he chooses to land in the Hudson River.

And even when none of the passengers were seriously injured, Sully finds himself under intense scrutiny by the National Transportation Safety Board (N.T.S.B.), whose investigation reveals that the plane could have made it to the airport and that one of the engines was still working. Sully still maintains the engines were out and if they tried to go to the airport, they would have crashed.

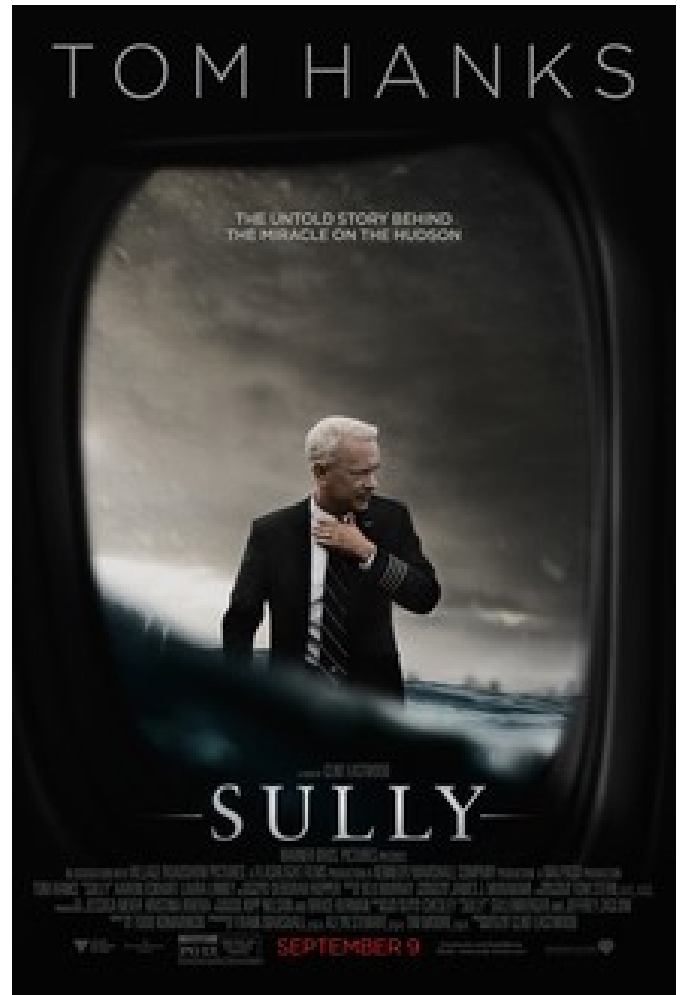
Starring Tom Hanks as Sully and Aaron Eckhart as First Officer Styles, Clint Eastwood's 2016 American biographical drama film directed by Clint Eastwood and written by Todd Komarnicki, is based on the 2009 autobiography Highest Duty by Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger and Jeffrey Zaslow.

The film will be shown in the Westlake Room at the rear of the Village Hall, doors open from 1:45pm.

Members only please (u3a licence restrictions), and the £2.50 fee covers the hire of the room.

If possible, please let the co-ordinator, Kim Hathrell, know if you planning to attend.!

([https://balsallcommon.u3asite.uk/u3a\\_groups/film-appreciation/](https://balsallcommon.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/film-appreciation/)), or call/text to 07510 725607.



## ACTIVITY GROUPS



### **OUT AND ABOUT VISIT TO St. MARY'S GUILDHALL -**

*Peter Calver*

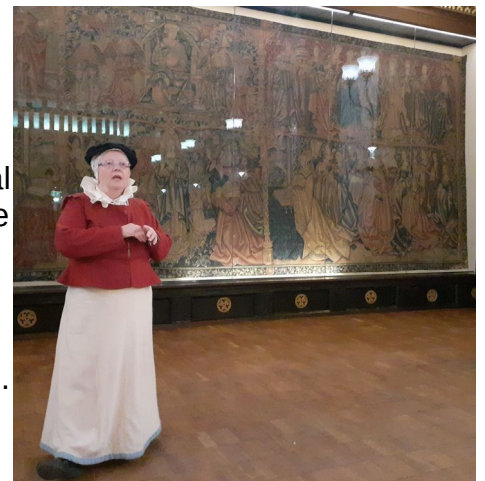
On Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March members of the Out and Group visited St Mary's Guild Hall in Coventry. We were given a guided tour by Mistress Mary.

The first Guildhall was a wooden construction built in the early 1340's for the Guild of St Mary. In about 1392, a major construction programme started. The first hall was

demolished. Over a period of about 40 years a larger hall was rebuilt in stone, now the Great Hall, with a complex of rooms built around it. These included a kitchen and ancillary rooms, meeting rooms, a gatehouse and entrance porch.

The Guildhall was damaged during the bombing raids of the Second World War. Caesar's Tower, which was largely destroyed, was subsequently rebuilt. Damage to the Great Hall roof and the Armoury was also repaired. There have been programmes of redecoration, renovation, restoration, alterations, modernisation, and periods of neglect.

The restoration of the Guildhall in 2020 revealed parts of the original building that have been hidden. Allowing the full magnificence of the Coventry Tapestry to be revealed.



Our tour included the original kitchen. Actually 4 kitchens that cooked food for the feasts held in the Great Hall. Mistress Mary told us about the working conditions in the kitchen. She also described the features of the Coventry Tapestry. This tapestry, commissioned and created between 1505 and 1515, is the oldest in the UK still hanging in its original position.

After the tour the members retired to the atmospheric Tales of Tea cafe to enjoy tea and a cream scone.



## MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

### MY LIFE AND TIMES AS SOLIHULL'S MAYOR – *David Bell*



It was a great honour and privilege to become Mayor of Solihull in 2008/09. This was one of the most hectic years of my life. In that year I attended 625 functions (sometimes five in a day). These ranged from many official openings such as 3 shops, 2 funeral parlours, 3 homes for the elderly, the new swimming complex, a training building for Landrover and a bus interchange through to the Nigerian ceremony of the Yam, giving Freedom of the Borough to Matt Croucher following his receiving the George Cross\*\* and helping to recognise countless charities.

Some were quite onerous but many were a delight and some quite memorable including my wife and I having the honour of an invitation to attend a Buckingham Palace Garden Party.

It wasn't until we arrived at the Palace – or more accurately at the gates of Buck House – that I realised that HM Queen – or at least Prince Philip – would not be there to greet us personally. I think the other 5,000 guests were equally disappointed.

Unfortunately, we didn't meet any members of the Royal Family although it was quite interesting to watch the Queen and Philip

meet and greet the select few that had clearly been singled out for particular attention; some who were disabled, some from the military and others from the arts and academic world.

The Royals often got into animated conversation with the select few, having been briefed about these guests' background beforehand

.A garden party is not complete without some sustenance and it was delicious. Even the sandwiches were a work of art or may be of science since they seem to have been cut with laser precision. Crusts were not in sight.

Some people were not impressed however. I remember the only comment my wife mentioned and that was that she was very disappointed at the standard of lawn edging.

Although we didn't meet any royals at the garden party we did meet three members of the Royal Family during the mayorship. Princess Alexandra was our favourite. She opened the Royal Star and Garter

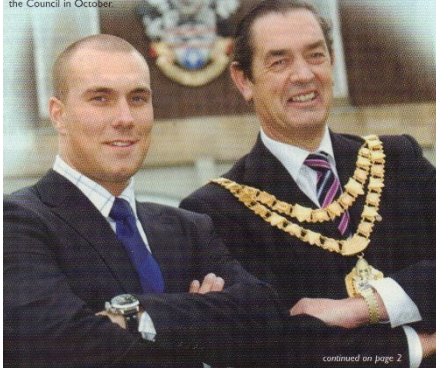
Home in Solihull which provides specialist dementia care. She had studied her brief very thoroughly.

We also met the Duke of Kent and Prince William and then the Duke of Wellington at Crufts - not the original you will realise but I think number nine!

One of the duties of the Mayor I believe is to recognise the great work of charities throughout the Borough. They vary greatly in size but there are over 600 of them helping residents to have a better life. We visited schools and younger children really didn't know much about the Mayoralty. Questions included. When you take the chain off at night are you normal? Do you live in a castle? And a rather sweet comment. "I think the Lady Mayoress is the most attractive lady I have ever met," I told him he ought to get out more!!

### Freedom of the Borough for Hero Marine

Royal Marine Reservist from Balsall Common, who received the George Cross for his extraordinary bravery, has been given the Freedom of the Borough of Solihull. Lance Corporal Matthew Croucher GC was bestowed the honour at a special meeting of the Council in October.



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● The Mayor of Solihull, Cllr David Bell, with Catherine O'Conner, aged five, Amy Frost, six, Sam Cullen, five, and Michael Griffith, ten.

### Mayor digs in to help the environment

THE Mayor of Solihull recently planted a tree in the environmental garden at St Andrew's School. Children and staff have spent the last two years working on the site. Youngsters have been involved in planting flowers, painting pebbles and creating a mural for the garden.

Earlier in the month Cllr David Bell and wife Sally turned up to put a sapling in the soil.

\*\* **Editor's note** An exceptional act of bravery. **Matthew Croucher**, GC, VR (born 14 December 1983) is a member of the Royal Marines Reserve and a recipient of the George Cross,

the highest British and Commonwealth medal for gallantry not in the face of the enemy, for his extreme valour in risking his life to safeguard the lives of his comrades. He was recommended for the award for throwing himself on a Taliban tripwire grenade to save his comrades. He was part of a reconnaissance mission near Sangin in Helmand Province in Afghanistan on 9 February 2008.

Moving through a compound at night he felt a trip-wire against his leg and saw that he had activated a grenade. He threw himself to the ground, and used his rucksack to pin the grenade to the floor, and tucked his legs up to his body.

He was thrown some distance by the explosion, but due to the protection offered by his rucksack and body-armour, suffered only a nose-bleed, perforated ear drums and some disorientation. The pack was ripped from his back by the explosion, and his body armour and helmet were pitted by grenade fragments.

Of the other three members of his patrol, the rear man managed to take cover by retreating round the corner of a building; the patrol commander threw himself to ground, and received a superficial face wound from a grenade fragment; and the final team member did not have time to react, and remained on his feet, and would have been within the lethal range of the grenade but for Croucher's action. The explosion breached a large lithium battery which was in Croucher's pack to power the patrol's electronic countermeasures equipment, causing it to burst into flames.



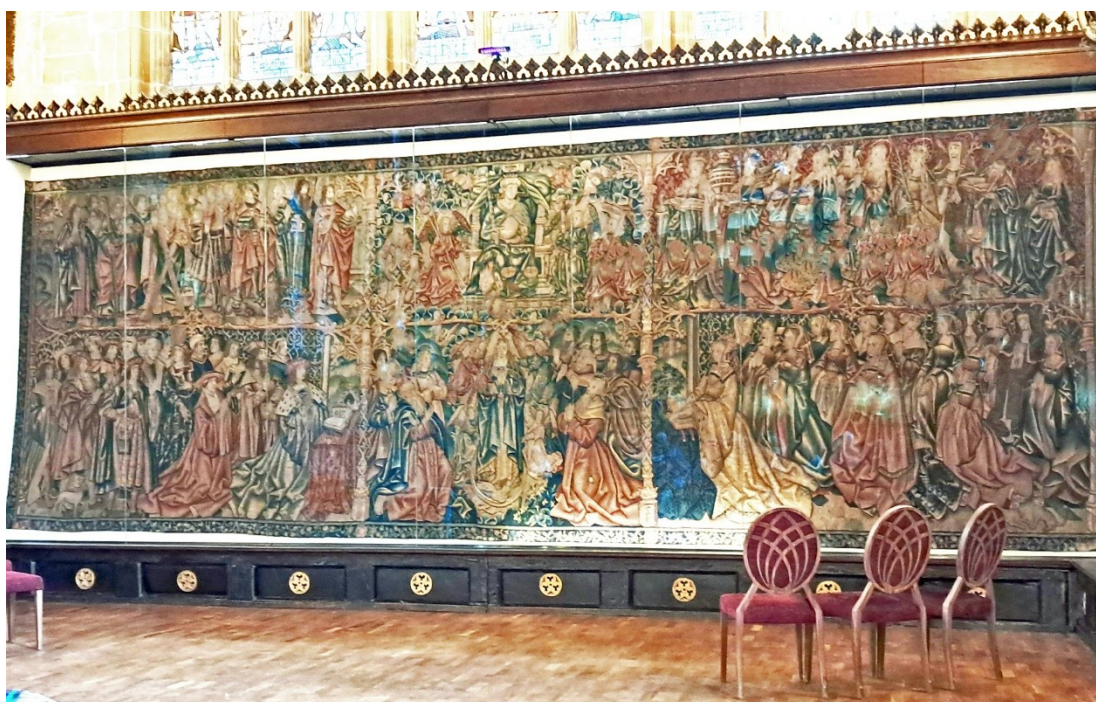
## **SENTINEL EDITOR – *Will Heard***

**I look forward to hearing from you. You can submit contributions on almost any subject. Please submit all contributions to The Sentinel via**

**[Contact Us - Balsall Common](#)**

**Thank you to all contributors to The Sentinel.**

**The magnificent tapestry at St. Mary's Guildhall  
Coventry**



(photoshopped to remove very annoying reflections on the protective glass)

## ROYAL REWARD FOR A JOB WELL DONE\*\* – *Jim Melville*



The Lord Chamberlain is  
commanded by Her Majesty to invite

*Mr. and Mrs. James Melville*  
*and Mr. Iain Melville*

to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace  
on Thursday 21st July 1994 from 4 to 6 pm

*Morning Dress, Uniform or Lounge Suit*

At the beginning of the 1990s the World Alliance of YMCAs approached the University of Warwick to see if the University's facilities were suitable for its international conference which was to be held in Summer 1994. I was working there as a manager in the Residences, Catering and Conferences department, which was then responsible for over 4000 student bedrooms. Many of these were ensuite and were used to produce revenue during the vacations for residential conferences.

Once the feasibility of the request had been considered and agreed, my director ask me to represent the department in all the negotiations and arrangements for this prestigious

event. Several years followed of detailed planning and meetings to ensure a successful outcome. At the beginning of July 1994, over 900 delegates from around the globe descended on the campus for the ten days. Not only did we accommodate them all, but they had to be fed breakfast lunch & dinner.

They took over all the many meeting rooms including the whole Arts Centre, which had to be open 24 hours a day. Arranging this with Security was a challenge. The Butterworth Hall had to be equipped with 5 simultaneous translation booths and the Music Room became the communications centre taking and making phone calls 24/7. Remember it was still early days for the ubiquitous mobile phone.

One day during the conference everyone left the campus to be taken by coaches to Lambeth Palace here a garden party had been arranged for them all. I hasten to add not by me. Imagine the number of coaches required.

**The organisers were very pleased with the smooth running of the conference and, as a "thank you", were able to arrange an invitation for my wife, my son and me to attend a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on the afternoon of 21<sup>st</sup> July.**

We travelled to London and stayed overnight at the Great Eastern Hotel, where I had started my hotel management career in 1968.

As Iain and I had both been born in Edinburgh we decided to wear Scotland's national dress – the kilt. It was a lovely sunny afternoon, but it felt strange walking through the Palace gates, past the guards, then through the Palace and out into the grounds.

We enjoyed our afternoon tea and did manage a glimpse of The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh and a walk around the grounds before leaving to come home after an interesting experience.



**\*\*Editor's note:** The headline is mine. Jim's suggestion was too modest.

# SOME PUBS WHAT I HAVE DRUNK IN – OR - MY LIFE AS A PUB CRAWL – OR MY LIFE AS SEEN FROM THE BOTTOM OF A BEER GLASS – *Will Heard*

The more astute reader will recognise there is a yawning gap between the title chosen for this piece and the more provocative title of “Some Pubs What I Have **Got** Drunk In”. I should point out that I have never got drunk in a pub in my life. That would be unseemly and untrue.

Nevertheless, I have to admit to getting drunk four times in my life, the occasions of which I remember distinctly, several are confessed herewith. Some would say that if I can remember these occasions then I clearly had not drunk enough. That may be so but it was enough to remind me each time that alcohol is a poison – a lesson that I imparted to my two sons, when young, and am now busily imparting to my three grandsons. Teaching by example is always the best policy. You can take that which way, as you will.



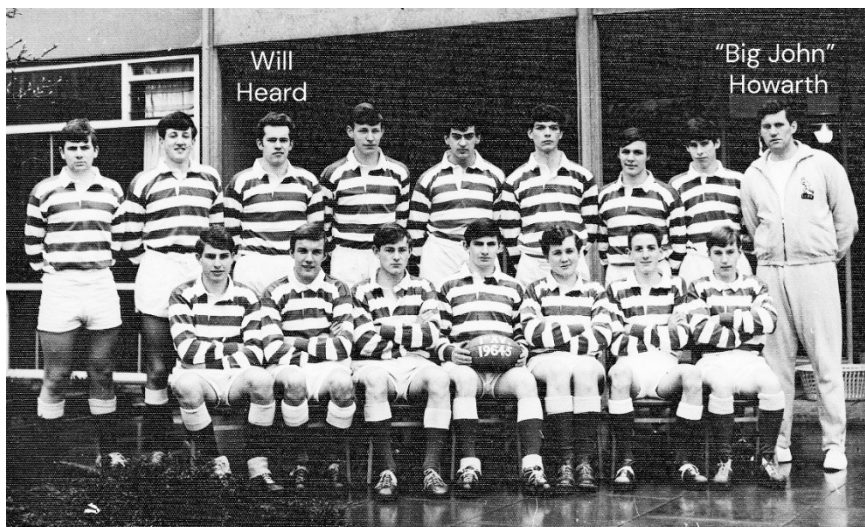
My early foray into the world of Bacchus really got going when, as a tall youth of fifteen years with quite a passable beard, I was able to frequent the Nottingham pub scene with impunity. This led me to sample the delights of The Bell Inn and Yates' Wine Lodge in Nottingham's Market Square. More importantly, in my development as an avid fan of jazz and British R&B, it got me into Nottingham University students' union bar, where, on one memorable night, I was able sample the delights of Humphrey Lyttleton and Rod Stewart (as part of Long John Baldry's Band) in the main hall **and** to stand next to Rod in the bar at half time.

This foray lasted through the six weeks of the school holiday and a week or so

into the new school year until our sports master – “Big John” Howarth - growled at me one day “get it off” which immediately prompted the

flashing of razor blades, not in anger but in sorrow. I really fancied myself with my manly chops.

**Burrowbridge** It was the first day of my life working, initially, as a management trainee for C&J Clarks, the footwear manufacturers, in Street in Somerset. I say “working” but that is a slight misnomer because the work consisted of spending the academic year studying for an HNC in business studies at Strode College in Street and most of the rest of the year working in one of the many Clarks shoe factories that were dotted around the West Country.



The male management trainees were housed in “The Grange” – a strangely Georgian looking building given that it had its origins before 1086 (or else it would not have been mentioned in the Domesday Book).



361) that overlooks the Somerset Levels.

Burrowbridge has two claims to fame. Long ago, King Alfred burnt those cakes not a stone's throw from a small farm in Burrowbridge; the very farm that in 1965 famously hosted yours truly to a pint of the roughest cider that any sane person could imagine. It was drawn from a man-sized barrel that may have been used for embalming old crones for all I know. It was the colour of Castrol and was equally as oily. But at a few pence a pint and fill a pop bottle to take away (that's a “carry-oot” for the Scots among you) I was not arguing.

Following a pint of jollop (as my dear old dad would have said), during which I was introduced to the most beautiful gutturally liquidly true Somerset accent emanating from the old farmer propped up in the corner of the parlour, the return to Street was as speedy as the journey to Burrowbridge, this time fuelled not only with Shell's finest gasoline but also with Farmer Giles' rocket juice which the driver had also imbibed.

**Street** Mind you, I was glad of the quick exit because I was completely out of my mind by the time that I got back to Street owing to the effects of a pint of real Somerset cider and the fresh air hyperventilating my lungs as I hung out of the car for fear of returning the contents of my stomach to



eye to the goings on.

The older students always held a party for the new intake in the cellars of this imposing building which was reputed to have an underground tunnel stretching as far as Glastonbury Abbey – some two miles distant. So, when one of them announced that he was going to Burrowbridge to get some cider for the party, innocently, I invited myself along for the ride.

Little did I know that “the ride” consisted of a hundred miles an hour dash in his Triumph Spitfire to Burrowbridge along the ridge road (A

its wrongful owner. I did not go to the party that evening but lay in a drunken stupor on my bed in the attic of The Grange hoping that “Brum”, the live-in housekeeper, did not find me.

I could have relaxed because later I came to understand that Miss Mabel Brinkworth, affectionately known as “Brum” owing to her Birmingham origins and accent, knew exactly what a hostel (for that was what The Grange was at that time) full of testosterone filled young lads got up to. She must have stumbled in the dark many times in her matronly career owing to the number of occasions that she had to turn a blind

Mabel, brought to Somerset in the war to serve her time as a land girl, had a soft spot for all her boys. She was a homely port of call for any lad who needed advice and help. It was she who later got me into the best appointed bedroom in The Grange – the only one on the ground floor right next to the kitchen. This meant that you didn't need to traipse through the whole of the building in your pyjamas to get your breakfast but more importantly you could squeeze through the window of the ground floor bedroom after a night out given that the main door was locked at eleven p.m.

**Bristol** Anyone who knows Bristol will testify to its cosmopolitan joie de vivre. It is a great place for architecture, science, industry and the arts. Like Liverpool, Bristol owes its place in our society to its maritime and colonial heritage. But in my day its only claim to fame was a great pub situated not far from where all the nurses lived near to Bristol Royal Infirmary and which hosted a jazz band every Friday night.

The problem was that Bristol is thirty miles from Street, accessible to non-drivers such as myself only by bus unless someone gave me a lift. That someone was one of the Clark's management trainees, Steve, who happened to possess a small van so five or six of us were able to pile in to the back and enjoy a great evening out only returning to Glastonbury in the small hours having spent the evening drinking, chatting up the nurses and listening to trad jazz that Acker Bilk would equally have enjoyed.

On the return journey, by the time we got to Glastonbury, there had been several pit-stops that tended to involve christening the cats eyes in the middle of the road but one memorable night someone had the bright idea that we should climb up the Tor and christen the trig point that sits next to the church-like tower at its highest point.



Anyone who climbed the Tor sixty years ago in broad daylight when no well-trodden paved footpath existed will testify to this rugged pilgrimage but in the pitch black and pretty half cut it was quite an achievement to reach the summit then do our duty before descending helter-skelter back to the van.



But that wasn't the end of our adventure because someone else had the brainwave that we should break into the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey to do goodness knows what. We got to the Abbey car park, piled out of the van, making lots of noise in the process, and duly climbed over the fencing at the side by which time the police arrived in a squad car and apprehended several of our crew. I got away and hid in the Abbey grounds for an hour or so before finding my way back to the flat (by now we lived in Glastonbury) where my compatriots were drinking cocoa and

thanksgiving their lucky stars that they had only had a ticking off.

**Glastonbury** The Grange was not my residence for the full three years that I was a Clarks management student. After a year or so at the Grange we had all found our feet and teamed up with others of like mind to find a suitable resting place. In my case this turned out to be a set of rooms above a greengrocer in Glastonbury, shared with Tom, Chris and Colin (their surnames have been deleted to protect the guilty). The greengrocer's latest incarnation is as an estate agent.

The entrance was to one side of the shop with a short corridor before climbing the stairs to the accommodation which consisted of two two-bedroomed flats that were essentially treated by as one flat.

There are tales to tell about my time in Glastonbury. However, I am determined not to tell all but to keep on track and record only the more notable alcohol related instances.

At that time "Glastonbury" (i.e. the rock festival at Pilton) was not even a glint in Farmer Eavis's eye. But Glastonbury is much more than just a pop festival.

It is indeed an exceptionally spiritual place and I don't mean that in an exclusively Christian religious sense even though the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey are slap bang in the middle of the town and, amongst many other Christian myths about Glastonbury, St. Joseph of Arimathea is said to have landed near to Wearyall Hill, a ridge that overlooks the town. You can access it via Roman Way, an indication that this was a beaten track long before the Christians got in the way of a good time

Incidentally, sitting on a bench on Wearyall Hill was where I proposed to my girlfriend (whom I had met on Valentine's day the year previously). Make of that what you will but I swear I was not drunk at the time.

Glastonbury's town hall, only a stone's throw from our flat, hosted rock groups each Saturday. The nearest big towns, Taunton, Yeovil and Weston, were far away so it attracted every rough son and daughter of the sod from miles around. It was a den of iniquity.



us

Glastonbury was a den of iniquity for another reason. It had thirteen pubs for a population of 5,000 or so whereas Street, not two miles away, with a similar population only had three pubs.

## A brief historical Interlude



There was a simple reason for this. The Clarks were Quakers and they ruled Street politically as well as economically. Quakers, for all the best reasons, frowned on the drinking of alcohol so, as the local magistrates, they were reluctant to issue drinks licences in Street. But the Clark family, who personally owned a shoemaking empire, probably worth tens of millions at 1966 prices but

lived in a modest house in the centre of Street, were a pragmatic bunch. They realised that their work force of down home red necked cider raddled sons of the turf (for they were farm labourers before they became shoemakers) would need some outlet on a Saturday night so relaxed their rules every now and then.

Maybe they harked back to their own hard-working days in the early 1820's, before their footwear empire was born, when the Clark family were sheep farmers who made sheepskin slippers as a sideline (the rest being history). Morelands of Glastonbury, famous for their sheepskin coats, probably had similar origins.

Thus, by the time I arrived in Street, there were three licensed pubs if you include the Street Working Men's Club as a pub. The other two were the Street Inn and The Royal Oak (half a mile or so out of town).



I later found out that Street also houses one of the great cider making dynasties in the shape of Hecks Cider (established 1841 and now in its 6<sup>th</sup>. generation of cider makers) but I bet the Burrowbridge farmers beat them in age as did their cider.

## Back to Glastonbury



So, Glastonbury Town Hall, miles from the entertainment hotspots of Taunton and Weston-Super-Mare, on a Saturday night, seethed with Somerset youth from miles around, all getting smashed in Glastonbury's thirteen pubs before descending on the Town Hall for an evening's entertainment.

It was after that entertainment had finished that the mayhem began one Saturday night in 1967. It was that particular night that the likely lads - Tom, Chris, Colin and myself, had decided to hold a party at our commodious flats just up the street from the Town

Hall so by the time the hoards were emptying the town hall our party was in full swing (or should I say full swig).

So, it was not long before the word got around that booze and music were available just up the road and our likely lads were suddenly inundated with numerous gate crashers looking for liquid refreshment or, if none were available, then a good punch up.

A punch up was what they got because, luckily for us, a good few of our guests were rugby players from Tor Rugby Club who did not want to share what little booze was left from the two firkins of beer and cider that we had provided for the evening, so proceeded to eject the gate crashers from every orifice of the building available to them.

This included the two third floor windows looking down onto the high street. Mercifully no bones were broken because you could drop down from the third floor to the second-floor balcony (see photo above) and then climb back in the windows to the second floor flat, so making a quick exit down the stairs and out into the street.

It was only the next day (Sunday) that we found out the full consequences of the battle when the owner of the greengrocer's below, who also happened to be our landlord, turned up with a face like thunder. No doubt he had been tipped off by local residents that something had gone on the night before and he had come to investigate.

The electricity fuse box that serviced the shop was situated in the short corridor from the outside door to the foot of the stairs that gave access to the flats. Unbeknownst to us, someone had switched it off the previous night. The landlord was somewhat unhappy when he found that £20 worth of frozen food (approx. £300 today) in his chest freezer was now thawed and unsaleable.

Eviction came swiftly, as did the speed at which cheques were written and wallets opened. This was when I fell back into the ample bosom of Mabel Brinkworth and secured the prestigious ground floor bedroom next to the kitchen in the Grange for the rest of my time as a Clark's management student.

I left The Grange for good one fateful day in 1968 (the 21<sup>st</sup> September to be precise) when I walked in my best pair of Clarks shoes the short distance from the Grange to



The Tor from Wearyall Hill  
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the local Methodist church and got married to a beautiful young girl named Sandra Lloyd – for it was she who said “yes” on Wearyall Hill.

So ended my riotous youth.

**u3a** learn,  
laugh,  
live