

PART 20

PART A ENERGY AND THE ATHENÆUM

1. Faraday, Brunel and Stephenson – drawings by Dan Cohn-Sherbok, 1985
2. The Athenæum and the Windsor Energy Group
3. Lord Howell of Guildford PC – Energy Imbroglgio in 2015
4. Fergus Allen CB, 1962 – Gas, Light, Coke (and Peat)
5. Sir Geoffrey Chandler, 1922-2011, elected 1966
6. Sir Denis Rooke OM CBE FRS FREng (1924-2008) elected 1973
7. Sir Peter Holmes (1932-2002), elected 1979

PART B THE ATHENÆUM IN THE NINETEEN SEVENTIES

1. Brian Gilmore CB, 1977 – Highlights and Low-lights
2. Jonathan Ruffer, 1978 – Tombstone from the Class of 78

PART C MEDICAL MATTERS

1. Dr Jonathan Sklar, 2013 – Without Protective Armour
2. Dr Peter Ringrose, 2004 – We knew we were on to something
3. Dr Tim Chambers, 1995 – Doctor on the Floor

PART D IMAGINATION AND INSPIRATION

1. Professor Peter Atkins, 1999 – From the Bonds of Evidence
2. Baron Franks OM GCMG PC, 1984 – What do you want for Christmas?

PART E FEARS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

1. Lord Howell of Guildford PC – Empires in Collision in 2016
2. Editor's Note – A Guest at the St Cecilia Concert – Elda Brizuela

PART F MORE CARTOONS BY BASIL HONE by popular request

PART G LOOKING BACK

1. Tom Foulkes, 2003 – On the Power of Ideas
2. Anthony JT Williams, 1975 – Clashing Cultures
3. Jonathan Ball, 1985 – Sir David Hunt and General Gordon

PART H LOOKING FORWARD

1. Professor Jeremy Black, 2007 – The Prospect for the Press
2. Editor's Note – A New Request for Contributions

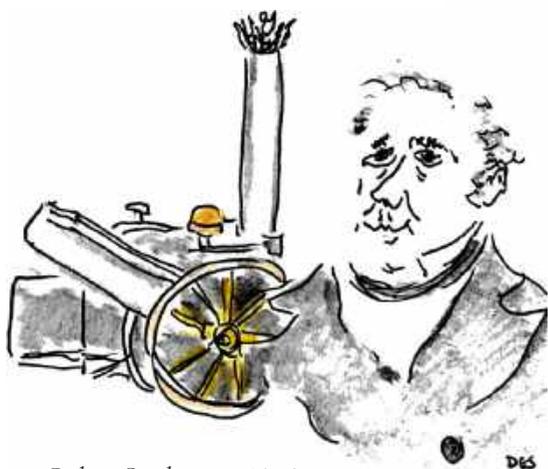
18th September 2020



Michael Faraday, 1824



Isambard Kingdom Brunel, 1830



Robert Stephenson, 1840

The Athenæum and the Windsor Energy Group

The Windsor Energy Group was founded at a large private dinner in the Athenæum in 2000. The first WEG Chairman was the late Sir David Gore-Booth KCMG KCVO who succumbed to cancer in 2004. Lord Howell of Guildford PC took over as Chairman in 2005 and remains in that position. Others still involved continuously from the outset are HE Khaled al-Duwaisan, Ambassador of Kuwait and Dean of the London Diplomatic Corps, Paul Tempest, the Executive Director 2000-2009 and Ian Walker who took over from him in 2009 in this capacity.

Since 2003, WEG has convened each March inside Windsor Castle for three days by courtesy of HM The Queen and the support of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. About 25 invited guests from around the world are joined by 20-25 serving London Ambassadors and High Commissioners for briefing in the Dungeon and for the annual Ambassadors Dinner in the Vicars Hall (completed in 1415). Major WEG gatherings have been held in the USA c/o The Federal Reserve Board, Houston as well as in Tokyo, Berlin, the European Parliament, Kazakhstan and Poland. Events in London are now held in the House of Lords Committee Rooms, various High Commissions and Embassies and their residences or hosted by the leading energy multinationals. Meetings with VIPs are held in the North and West Libraries from time to time.

In this issue we include, with his permission, some extracts by Lord Howell from two recent books, *Empires in Collision – The Green versus Black Struggle for our Energy Future* and *Surviving the Storm – The New Geopolitics of Energy*. Also included in these pages are details of three recent Athenian members: Sir Geoffrey Chandler, 1966, Sir Dennis Rooke, 1973 and Sir Peter Holmes, 1979, all prominent in the Global Energy world of their day.

This is the patent age of new inventions
For killing bodies and for saving souls
All propagated with the best intentions;
Sir Humphry Davy's lantern, by which coals

Are safely mined for in the mode he mentions,
Timbuctoo travels, voyages to the Poles,
Are always to benefit mankind, as true,
Perhaps, as shooting them at Waterloo.

Lord Byron died in the year the Club was founded. Here he is in full flow on Sir Humphry Davy who was the first Chairman of the Athenæum in 1824.

Lord Howell of Guildford PC

Energy Imbroglia in 2015

(OED. Imbroglia: a state of confused entanglement: a complicated or difficult situation: a serious misunderstanding)

For politicians and the policy-making world, energy issues have a particular characteristic. They lie quiescent for long periods while society enjoys, indeed takes for granted, plentiful and uninterrupted supplies of fuel and power at reasonable cost. Then suddenly, like a sleeping snake uncoiling, they leap up and grab government by the throat, disrupting everyday life and economic activity, generating unforeseen collateral damage, and threatening the very survival of governments. Such a time has arrived recently for a number of governments, especially in Europe and especially in Britain.

Energy Prospects are Changing Swiftly

Today, energy fortunes are changing all across the planet, not least the fortunes of numerous Commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia as well as the fortunes of Britain itself. What is the biggest single cause of this change? It is the extraordinary and largely unpredicted shale oil and gas revolution and the associated improved technologies for recovering oil and gas economically which underlie it. Unbelievable five years ago, the USA is now producing more liquid petroleum than any other country in the world, an increase of over 50% over the last three years while shale gas is displacing coal throughout the US economy. Saudi Arabia which has held the No 1 position for over 20 years is now urged into a policy of cutting oil production to prop up the global oil price. In political and economic terms, higher output in the USA has reduced the ability of OPEC led by Saudi Arabia to control global energy pricing while at the same time downgrading somewhat the interest of the USA in protecting the energy supply security of the rest of the world.

The losers in this new power game will be those countries who burden themselves with expensive energy, with low investment in new energy and electricity supply facilities, and with a hesitant approach to new resource development.

Britain has half tumbled into the second category, struggling to modernise the nuclear sector, which ought to have been transformed thirty years ago, and handicapping itself with expensive power, ensuring low investment in new energy facilities, and offering only a hesitant welcome to resource development. All this adds a heavy burden to the British economy, weakens its capacity to participate in the global energy revolution, and slows down both economic and social progress. In the wider world energy scene, accepted wisdom has

been overtaken. Middle East oil and gas dominance, OPEC power, Russian Gazprom gas monopoly, peak oil and gas - all the foundations of twentieth century concern about energy security are beginning to crumble and collapse.

This may sound as if it belongs more in the hard, real world of power and resources than in the digital age. But in fact, it is microchip technology and information expansion which has opened out the new resource pattern, while the network world is more heavily dependent than ever on totally reliable and affordable electricity and energy supplies. Indeed, it is cheap and plentiful power supplies which hold the key to the defeat of world poverty as well as to the return of prosperity to the already industrialised world.

The global transformation in the pattern of energy resources, driven by the shale oil and gas revolution, is changing the face and future of numerous countries, previously believed to be, and feeling themselves to be, well out in the cold and irretrievably dependent on others for their daily energy supplies. African nations are especially well-placed in this scene.

An Opportunity for the UK

All this ought to be of major advantage to the UK in world markets. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, there are more than half a dozen Commonwealth member states pondering how to exploit large new fossil fuel resources commercially. British firms are extraordinarily adept at helping development in the kind of offshore conditions these countries face (other examples include Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa and on the Atlantic side, Sierra Leone, the Nigerian giant, and Ghana). The smaller Commonwealth states, many of them with highly constrained economies face horrendously high prices for imported diesel and long to find ways to move to both cheaper and cleaner energy sources. British ingenuity and experience built up on both North Sea and world-wide experience, ought to be well qualified to help.

In addition, Britain itself at home is, or ought to be, superbly placed and highly attractive to new overseas investors in manufacturing electricity generating plants and equipment, the design of more advanced transmission systems, and more efficient electricity and energy usage. Out of the renewed interest in North Sea oil and gas and onshore shale oil and gas, there are likely to be opportunities for a revived supply industry serving the world market and for the UK to market its expertise in new refinery and petrochemical products in close co-operation with the leading international exploration, refining, and operating and servicing companies.

Vast Resources of UK Coal and Plentiful Gas, Shale and Oil

Britain holds vast resources of coal and still plentiful North Sea gas and oil - its neighbours are clamouring for more British piped gas - especially Norway but also Russia via its proposed

branch line from Nordstream to East Anglia. Britain also holds a very large onshore shale gas potential. Suppliers round the world are eager to ship more frozen gas (LNG), and the UK has excellent and growing facilities to receive LNG and transmit it into the high-quality gas grid. There is plenty of wind and tide potential in the UK, long and deep civil nuclear experience (despite the setbacks of the last century), top quality skills, and innovative power both in conventional oil and gas development, production, and transmission and in green and energy efficient technologies.

This ought to be the ideal recipe for reliable, low-cost, sustainable energy supplies to power the British economy for ages to come, not to mention well-heated and comfortable homes for the British population indefinitely into the future at prices they can afford with ease. Energy policy should be pushing Britain forward, not holding it back.

The UK pricing nonsense

Something is badly wrong. Instead of plentiful, cheap, and reliable power supplies, we have the opposite - an energy imbroglio with uncertainty. Today we have eye-watering price increases, and real fear of power failures stalking the scene. British energy prices are said to be some of the highest in Europe and the world and are set to rise higher still. Britain's energy policy ought to be the least controversial and smoothest running part of government. Instead it is locked into out-of-date commitments and strategies, broadly labelled 'The Green Transition', and largely dictated and corralled by equally dated EU energy policy requirements. The result is delusion on a grand scale, and chaos.

This is not just bar room grumbling at ever higher energy bills. It is an unavoidable conclusion I have reached after serving for two-and-a-half years as international energy security minister, serving the same length of time as Secretary of State for Energy in Margaret Thatcher's time, having written books and countless articles on energy; issues, and having followed every twist and turn of energy issues in many countries over a period of forty years.

To repeat, we in the British Isles are in energy chaos. None of our objectives will be reached. All are severely threatened.

Editor's Note

Lord Howell of Guildford PC has been Chairman of Windsor Energy Group since 2005. This extract appeared in the Group's hardback briefing for their annual 3-day consultations in Windsor Castle in 2015 under the title Surviving the Storm – The New Geopolitics of Energy.



Fergus Allen CB, 1962 deceased 2017

Gas, Light, Coke (and Peat)

It was after we'd crossed the Royal Canal
that we got the feel of the country's otherness,
people so chilly they were forced to burn
the land they lived on, chopped up into sods,
which they had to dry in the dark, wet summers.
One day they would have consumed their smallholdings.

We by contrast were always warm and comfortable,
looked after by the Gas, Light & Coke Company
(whose workings on Misery Hill we avoided,
not liking the dust and the smell of sulphur)...

Once home, the Gas, Light & Coke Co took charge,
heated the baths, warmed up the Turkish towels
and made ice for our preprandial drinks.
Not that we took it for granted. Pathetic
turf-cutters were ever in our thoughts, as
were the confessors who kept them in order...

Fergus Allen CB was appointed Chief Scientific Adviser based in the Cabinet Office in 1965. In 1974, he was appointed First Civil Service Commissioner and Chairman of the Final Selection Board for the Civil Service. He retired in 1981.

After retirement he flourished as a poet and published various collections of verse, the first three with Faber – The Brown Parrots of Providencia (1993), Who Goes There? (1996) and Mrs Power Looks Over the Bay (1999). Gas, Light and Coke came next in 2006, published by Dedalus Press of Dublin, and it is from this volume that the above extracts have been selected. His poetry is subtle and infused with dry wit, much of it deeply ironic.

He saw himself first and foremost as an Irish poet and drew extensively on memories of his boyhood and youth in Ireland. He also enriched his poetry with images drawn from his scientific training and expeditions:

David Morphet

Editor's Note

The three Athenian Energy Members whom I worked for joyously and revered greatly were Geoffrey Chandler, Denis Rooke and Peter Holmes.

Sir Geoffrey Chandler, 1922-2011, elected 1966

“Geoffrey was a giant in the world of business and human rights. He was largely responsible for introducing the idea that all companies had a responsibility for respecting human rights of all those on whom their business had an impact, beyond just obeying the law of whatever country in which they were operating.”

From an Obituary by Peter Mason in The Guardian.

During World War Two, Geoffrey was parachuted into the mountains of Western Macedonia in Greece to work mainly on his own with the local resistance groups harrying the German occupiers. His book titled “The Divided Land” written in 1959 recounted how the murderous guerrilla warfare waged between the extreme left partisans and the extreme right factions cost the lives of a very large number of moderate, peaceful and hard-working Greeks who were progressively marginalised and then eliminated in the civil war which followed.

In 1959 I applied to Shell for advanced graduate entry and was sent to talk to Geoffrey, then Chief Economist of the Group. He invited me to join him in his Economics Division for three years but warned me that all entrants were to expect to be posted to an operating company overseas within the first five years. Meanwhile the Bank of England had offered me one of the eight graduate places open in the year 1959 starting at a meagre salary of £610 per annum. Geoffrey kept his much more generous offer open and helped greatly by appointing me as an outside part-time lecturer at Shell’s training centre at Teddington where the entrants on each course were sent up to the Bank of England to listen to me talking about the history of the Old Lady and life in the City of London. As I knew little at that time about either, the Bank Librarian provided useful booklets on both subjects to give to each Shell trainee after their session or visit. The Bank made no objection and were helpful in giving me time off to attend at Teddington whenever I was needed.

In 1976 Geoffrey arranged for me to spend one year on secondment in Shell Group Planning with a spell in Saudi Arabia where Shell was experiencing the painful closing-down of two mammoth projects in mid-construction, one a new world-scale refinery and the other a world-scale petrochemical complex. Shell were aware that I had been in and out of

Saudi Arabia for the previous three years. I would be given well-structured visits to 12 Shell operating companies worldwide. It took us six months to fully resolve the Saudi problem.

In 1978 Prime Minister Callaghan appointed Geoffrey Director-General of the National Economic Development Office on a 5-year contract. In 1983 Prime Minister Thatcher announced Geoffrey's knighthood in recognition of all he had achieved in that position. By then he was deeply involved in Amnesty International and became chairman of its UK Business Group in 1991. On leaving Shell he had sold his beautiful house in Blackheath Park and bought a smaller house 30 yards from ours in West Greenwich. I, meanwhile, had re-joined Shell in 1985 as Head of the International Energy Division (PAE) for six years followed by a Shell-supported appointment as Director-General of the World Petroleum Council for another eight years.

Sir Denis Rooke OM CBE FRS FREng (1924-2008) elected 1973

Denis was born in New Cross and died not far away in Abbey Wood. Between the two he was a neighbour of ours on the opposite side of Greenwich Park. His first job in the gas industry was as a junior engineer at the coal-gas coking plant in East Greenwich. In 1947-49 he was in charge of the UK plan to import Liquefied Natural Gas from Algeria and in 1959 sailed on the first new gas carrier, the Methane Pioneer bringing the first trans-ocean shipment of LNG - from the USA to the UK.

In 1966-71 he took charge of the expansion of the national gas grid involving the conversion of every gas appliance in the country to switch from locally manufactured coal-gas to the use of our own natural gas from the North Sea and LNG from Algeria. He was appointed Chairman of the British Gas Corporation and in this capacity, reluctantly, saw it through to its privatisation and transformation into British Gas plc in 1986.

In 1979-80 the huge new UK North Sea Gas Gathering Project received Government approval. The need to attract adequate private financing led to a new unit located in the Bank of England with ex-Deputy Governor, Sir Jasper Hollom as Chairman and myself as CEO/Secretary. Denis Rooke asked the Bank if this Secretariat could move over with me to British Gas HQ on a 2-year secondment. I moved in October 1981. Within four weeks Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had axed the project.

"What next?" asked Denis. I said that I thought the Norwegians were assuming far too high a price for their present and future gas exports direct by sea-bed pipeline to the UK. Over the previous eight years I had been working closely with the Norwegian Ministers of Energy and Finance and their senior staff on other Anglo-Norwegian matters. "They are, in my view, very good people, closer to the psychology and ethos of the UK than any other country", I said. "They do not understand that we may have to import LNG from elsewhere

through the next 50 years if they become too obstinate. What you need is an extensive report for them in plain, honest English explaining all clear options for us based on my visits to each gas producer government and the technical details provided by the best engineer you have got with sound overseas experience. You are the global godfather of international trade in LNG. Here is your chance to oversee the next big step forward.” “OK”, he said with a warm smile. “Off you go.” First, Trinidad for a month, then Venezuela (vast volume of gas but preference to sell it to the USA), Nigeria, Cameroon, Qatar, Norway, Egypt, Mexico and five others. Then a programme of return visits with a witty, wise and wonderful man, James Allcock, Director of Gas Purchasing at British Gas.

*Sir Peter Holmes (1932-2002), Chairman of Royal Dutch Shell Group,
1985-1993, elected 1979*

Peter was born in Athens and lived through boyhood in Turkey where his father had a commercial company. His grandfather and great-grandfather worked for the Levant Consular Service. In Korea as a National Service platoon commander in the Royal Leicestershire Regiment, he pioneered a successful new form of aggressive patrolling of no man’s land and was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery each night. He was educated at Malvern College and Trinity College, Cambridge leaving with a BA in History. He told me that he only joined Shell in 1956 to pay off his Himalayan mountaineering debts and the costs over two years of an extended honeymoon map-making in Northern India.

Towards the end of my two years in the World Bank in Washington DC in 1983-85, he asked me whether I would like to join him in London where my title would be Head of International Energy Division (PAE). This involved a great deal of travelling worldwide. It included my presence outside every OPEC meeting from start to finish throughout the next six years and regular visits to most of the OPEC member countries. In London my main function was as Secretary of the Shell Group Energy Panel where the Joint Managing Directors and Heads of Department met regularly, alternating between London and The Hague.

On my first day with Peter in Shell Centre, his first words were “I hate funerals and, even more, official lunches and dinners in No.10. This was Holmes-speak to inform me I would be taking his place several times a month. Similarly, again in Holmes-speak, at our Monday morning chat together, he would say, by way of example, “I hate wasting time flying. Can you take this letter of apology to the Minister of Energy in Helsinki. He says they want to nationalise the whole Finnish oil sector”. In the case of Helsinki, it was bitterly cold in late-December. The plane was two hours late. The Minister’s car was waiting to take me to the meeting with him. There the Minister and his team were waiting for me in a luxurious Sauna. They were sitting stark naked. Immediately, we all went outside to roll in the deep snow. I drew the line at jumping

through a hole in the frozen lake but was punished with a vigorous beating with beech twigs.

I was back in Shell Centre by 3.00 pm the following day. “Well?” asked Peter. I explained that I had asked the Minister’s chauffeur if the Minister had a boat and had got a one-word “Yes” in reply. The Minister and I spent most of our time talking about sailing. Before I left the Sauna, I assured Peter, I had handed over then Peter’s sealed letter. The Minister had opened it and laughed but did not comment. “Anything else?” asked Peter. “Only that I doubt if I would recognise him in a business suit and glasses. All I can tell you is that he has a large birthmark just above his left buttock.” I then displayed the formal document signed by the President and certified by The Lady of the Bath House that I had indeed successfully completed what was asked of me and that my name would be added to the official annals as a Knight in the Order of the Bath – a relic and reminder that I treasure to this day.

Malcolm Bishop, 1994

How wondrous a thing is Zoom
Brings your friends right into your room
So when it fails
Heartrending wails
Usher in angst, doom, and gloom

So he whose magic touch
With the digital double Dutch
Can quickly repair
Such a source of despair
We all thank, and very much

Oh joy! They’re back in mine, and I in theirs
What is discussed? Oh! Who cares
I’m scanning their books
The treasured ‘objets’ in nooks
But! What’s this? There’s the Ath’s Drawing room, or the stairs!

Now, when selecting the ‘Club Background’ mode,
Remember, I pray, the Dress Code.
Or - If ties offend –
And coats, are the end,
Just switch off the Vid. Zoom in woad.

The Athenæum in the Seventies

In sum, I retain two overriding memories of the Club I joined: a reserved yet welcoming culture, set in a shabby Clubhouse. In the following paragraphs I will add corroborative detail to these assertions.

The Clubhouse

Physically, the Athenæum of 1977 was shabby-genteel. You might have said “tatty”, but that would imply poor taste as well as poor condition. Certainly there were ill-judged items: the telex machine that clattered to itself in the lobby; the wine cupboard that distorted the harmonies of the Coffee Room; the clunky Paris goblets (I think they were called), and the acoustic tiles in fly-blown polystyrene that lowered like a cardboard sky over the Coffee Room. But these were few, and superficial. They could be changed, and over time they were. I say “shabby-genteel” because, pervasively, rooms and furniture of real quality were being neglected. Leather was cracked, and occasionally even a spring came through. Windows were dirty, woodwork scratched, walls grubby, carpets worn. The main doors fitted badly, and we were asked to use one only, for fear of something breaking. One day a waterfall appeared at the south end of the Drawing Room, and members of the Executive Committee joined staff in mopping up. The first time I recall members being consulted about the use of their money was an informal sounding about whether to redecorate the Coffee Room, or to repair the structure of the Drawing Room (where the ceiling above the west fire-place was held up by a girder), or to advance the cellar, and the kitchen equipment, some way towards the requirements of health and safety. There was only money enough for one of the three. (Members’ views may have some significance for the historian of ideas: they preferred them in the order given - aesthetics before prudence before working conditions). All this continued amid a sense that such things were, if unfortunate, still somehow below a gentleman’s notice. I am reminded of the remark of a member when trouser-presses were installed a few years later. When the Secretary explained that they met the needs of members who had come to London for official engagements he replied “Nonsense - this is a club for gentlemen who wear good clothes badly”.

The long upward struggle out of this shabby setting began with the decision in the mid-80s to privatise Ruysbrack’s marble bust of Alexander Pope and to invest the proceeds in a new lease. It transformed the balance sheet, but it also marked the emergence of a will to manage the Club for the better - for instance, by negotiating in the new lease access for the first time to the garden. But that lay in the future.

The magnificent staircase, magnificent then as now. At the top of the first flight, and again in the elbows of the next flights, were sofas for those who wished to pause in their ascent. I thought them quaint at the time, but the idea grows on one. The landing had no Nobel Book. The Drawing Room was splendid, then as now. The round table to the north had a busy Question Book (rather put out of its business by the arrival of Google), and a particularly impressive snuff horn, but no Obituaries Book. The Candidates Book was alongside the London Library books. Its confidentiality seemed to cause no problem: Drawing Room tourism was hardly known. The South Library was as now except for the technology. It was reserved for silent members only, but no notice was needed on the door to say so ...

The Culture

In its culture, the Club was reserved. You might have said “forbidding”, but that would imply that it was unwelcoming, which was not so. Indeed it was not until 2012 that I first felt unwelcome in my own club - like the man in the Bateman cartoon, in fact, when I went back to the new Smoking Room to retrieve my glasses and was met by the glare of every contestant in a bridge competition. In the 70s, by contrast, all rooms were quiet and sparsely inhabited but they belonged to members and members were welcome in them. The Coffee Room in the evening was likely to contain a scattering of members dining alone behind the Times or Telegraph. That they knew one another was evidenced by a certain coalescing in the Drawing Room afterwards to discuss, inter alia, the weather and seven across. Ladies were allowed as guests at dinner, but there were few, and their unwritten dress code was, as Louisa Service later described it, “not smart casual, more dowdy formal”. At first sight it all deserved Noel Coward’s dialogue in Present Laughter when a character told that the Athenaeum has made him pompous, replies: It can’t have. I’ve been too frightened to go in” ...

Deference was given to age, tradition and habit. Particular chairs or sofas in the Drawing Room were tacitly left for particular senior members. There was indeed a small cadre of members who seemed to live in the Club from breakfast to 11pm, when they strolled home. They did not run the Club, but somehow the Club was run for them. I got to know them a little when I lunched at the Club on a Saturday - in those days it was open to about 4pm on Saturdays. Unfortunately I retain only a very general sense, which must clearly be wrong, that they had all served as Chief Justice of the Sudan and now had a small set in the Albany. They told hilarious tales of cases they had judged, but told them with straight faces and in suitably quiet tones ...

Governance

The governance of the Club was centralized, and paternal. Members elected the Committee and expected them to get on with it. And so did the Committee.

The Library Committee also laid claim to consequence. It was proud of its seniority (I

was once told that the Athenæum had amassed a considerable library before the members got around to building the Clubhouse to keep it in: “other clubs have libraries, but this is a library with a club”. Much was made of the fact that in the Rules the Librarian was placed on a par with the Secretary. But somehow the Library Committee was more like a college of priests tending ancestral remains than a functioning part of the Club. They seemed to regard books as something to be preserved, above all from the evils of being read.

The General Committee elected members in three months only, from January to March each year. Asked if elections could be held a little more often, the Chairman said “Out of the question. Quite impracticable”. On various occasions it was briskly declared to be impracticable to provide bathrooms en suite; to open the Club in August; to close it at weekends; to employ a qualified accountant; to take credit cards. The reason was always impracticality, avoiding arguments about merits. The masters of this administrative style did not even need words: at least one of the Trustees when I joined the General Committee could score an undisputed six by a brief cough from a remote armchair.

The Food

Catering at the Club was humdrum, but not worse than that. Members grumbled a little, rather by rote as if there were a tradition to be maintained. But in truth it was pretty much what most of us wanted. The ideal was a thick soup, followed by meat and two veg, with beer or claret. The claret was good, the draft beer was very good. The blue Cheshire cheese and honey and ginger ice cream were a treat then unavailable elsewhere in London. When I commented to a grumbling member how good I thought them he replied “Hmm. I suppose they don’t cook them”. Most members really wanted to lunch for seven and six, by which they meant seven shillings and sixpence though the currency had been decimalized in 1971. I end with one over-riding conclusion. The more I recall, the more respect and affection I feel for those who, in their own way and in their own times, carried this remarkable Club through difficult times so that we could enjoy it today. May we do as well for our successors.

Brian Gilmore CB was Chairman of the Athenæum from 2000 -2003.

Brian Gilmore, 1977

Taedium

Hector Berlioz
Frequently haunted Athena’s purlieus
Where silences inspired him to
 write his taedium (though he
 spelled it Te Deum)
To the Athenæum.

Jonathan Ruffer, 1978

Tombstone from the Class of '78

I have spent over half my life as a member of the Athenæum, and my earliest years were stories of the Athenæum from my grandfather, who was proud to be a member.

I was put up to it, and put up for it by Roger Scruton, who thought that the club should be open to people who had neither been a bishop, nor in a position to win an MC on D-day. There was the small detail of whether or not there was any evidence of 'excellence achieved'; I had, however, recently written a book on the burning issue of Edwardian Shooting Parties, which had the unlikely accolade of 50,000 copies sold - clear evidence to Membership Committee in need of new blood that I must indeed be excellent. I was seconded by the Dean of the Arches, Kenneth Elphinstone, who held a shadowy role - the Queen's Visitor, tasked with the declaration of madness, as I recall. ('Can this possibly be right?', I ask myself - but I do remember asking him how you could identify insanity on a cursory meeting, to be met with the crisp one-liner, 'where there's the smell of cat's urine, there is madness').

What is my happiest memory of the club? Christmas 1993 - I might be out by a year, when Richard Smith - a much underrated Secretary, and a fine Christian man - organized a children's Christmas party. My daughter (b. 1990) was entranced by the whole thing, and especially the wonderful, wonderful long serving faithful [to my shame, I can't remember her name - she worked for 40 years with us, learning difficulties, and no difficulty at all in making everyone she met feel better about themselves], dressed as an elk, complete with toothy grin. The club overrun with staff dressed as furry animals, and children in raptures.

When the club celebrates its bicentenary, I shall not quite have been a member for a quarter of its existence. It reminds me that the institution is greater than its transient membership, and it thrives when its tenantry look after it - and one another.

Jonathan Ruffer: Barrister, Middle Temple. Career in the City (Ruffer Investment Management Ltd 1994 (Ruffer LLP 2004). Author, The Big Shots - Edwardian Shooting Parties, 1977. D Litt Durham University, D Law, Northumbria. Hobby: scrubbing up Auckland Castle - and the rest of Bishop Auckland. married Jane, 1982, one daughter Hattie, very pretty.



Dr Jonathan Sklar, 2013

THE MEDICAL ETHIC WITHOUT PROTECTIVE ARMOUR

Today somebody in my building suddenly died.

On a recent Thursday evening, a few days before, in cities, towns and hamlets all over the UK people gathered by open front doors, windows and balconies in their locked down homes to applaud by extensive clapping the doctors, nurses and ancillary workers of the NHS. Some even were heard to blow trumpets!

It was a spontaneous event emerging from emails, twitter, Face book and street gatherings on WhatsApp groups- our modern non-touch communicative tools. And it was done to honour our present-day heroes, manning the clinics and hospitals, all on an emergency footing to protect, trying to keep our citizens with Covid-19 alive if possible.

Yet the emotionality behind this pleurably impressive outpouring of rapture had a shadow. It was becoming clear from several accounts, often unattributed, from nurses and doctors that, being on the front line, they expected some colleagues to die, having caught the virus due to their close proximity to disease. That, as part of the medical ethic, they were prepared for, but to do so without the necessary protective armour was almost too much to bear to hear. The British Medical association today wrote "The continued failure to provide an adequate supply of personal protective equipment to health workers is putting doctors and patients alike at risk of serious illness and even death (BMA member update 30/3/20).

In the shadow of wonderful applause for our courageous health service workers lies the thought that some, perhaps many will, have to die in their mission to help most of us survive. Without the medical front line, accepting the very ill for triage, there would be total chaos in the country. Yet we know the real price will be paid with the rising numbers of Covid-19 deaths of medical, nursing and ancillary staff at the front-line.

Were we not applauding their courage to be standing in that place where they too might die? As of the 30 March 25% of British doctors are off work, sick or in isolation themselves or with a family member ill due to coronavirus. 'At Columbia University Irving Medical Centre in Manhattan half the intensive care staffs are already sickened by coronavirus'. In China more than 3000 doctors were infected, nearly half in Wuhan. In Italy, the number of infected health workers is now twice the Chinese total, and the National Federation of Orders of Surgeons and Dentists had compiled a list of 50 who have died. Nearly 14% of Spain's confirmed coronavirus cases are medical. (New York Times by M.Schwartz 30/3/20).

Today somebody I knew in an apartment in the block that I inhabit did not wake up from his last night's sleep.

Curiously I had over the last few days been pondering on how 16th Century Venice had

dealt with contagion from carriers of disease from faraway lands, in the sailors, merchants and traders coming daily to the great city. The plague of 1576-77 killed 50,000 almost a third of the population. In 1680, the Bubonic plague killed 80,000, with 595 Venetians killed on October 9th that year. Later the Venetians set up a quarantine Island, Poveglia in 1776 to house those suffering the plague, and it is interesting to note, it morphed into a mental hospital in 1922, which closed in 1968. It became a checkpoint for all goods and people coming to and going from Venice and acted as a temporary confinement station. It is thought that over 100,000 persons were buried in plague pits on the island. Now every Accident and Emergency hospital unit is a Plague Island. But what facilities are there in social services to look after the Corona infected well who cannot look after themselves? The policeman I discussed this possible provision with wondered why the Plague Island in Venice did not have a well-known modern day counterpart in London. Not knowing, our house and the ill person's relatives were left waiting to know, whilst the dead man quietly lay in his bed in the flat.

Dr Jonathan Sklar is a Training Analyst BPAS London

Of the Universe, some wit said, Athenians knew most parts
As Masters of the Sciences, Literature, Divinity and Arts
Yes inspired by music, pun or fun, through warming hearts
They could distil their lives and work and do much worse
Conveying secret thoughts and opinions terse
Into remarks of deep humanity and truly awe-full verse.

PT at the 2008 St Cecilia Concert



Peter S Ringrose (2004)

“We knew we were on to something when the clinical stores were broken into!”

It all started back in the mid 1980's as a very speculative idea to discover a new type of cardiovascular medicine that would be beneficial in cardiovascular chest pain/angina by working through a very novel mechanism. At the time I was responsible for medicinal projects and biosciences at Pfizer's research labs in Sandwich, Kent.

The mechanism indirectly involved the very simple natural molecule nitric oxide that causes smooth muscle relaxation and increased blood flow by raising levels of a mediator molecule called cyclic GMP. This mechanism ultimately led to the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine in 1998. However, this mediator is also degraded by an enzyme called PDE5. It was this degradative enzyme that was chosen by the Pfizer team as a target to block. Out of many molecules we synthesised, a new molecule (UK 92480) was optimised in 1989 and ultimately given the generic name sildenafil.

Sildenafil entered early clinical study shortly afterwards but yielded disappointing results on the expected cardiovascular parameters. However we observed a surprising finding in some of the young male volunteers.....and that was spontaneous erections! Rumour had it that this may have been facilitated by a young attractive nurse working in the phase one unit at the Swansea hospital conducting the studies!

Rather than abandon the project, we decided on exploring whether this “side effect” was clinically meaningful as a potential drug for treating male impotence or as it became more widely known, erectile dysfunction.

We knew however that we were potentially on to something when one of the clinical centres was broken into and samples of the new medicine stolen!

Initially research management in the US were not in favour of developing a drug for an indication that was well outside of Pfizer's area of expertise. Marketing and Legal functions also raised concerns about how such a drug would be used or even abused and indeed whether it had any real market potential.

Despite all of this the original team in Sandwich persevered and ultimately sildenafil was given its now more familiar name Viagra.

Viagra was approved for marketing in Europe and the US in 1998 and quickly became one of Pfizer's biggest selling drugs, achieving annual peak sales of almost \$2 billion in 2008. Viagra has become a household name and is used in the successful treatment of erectile dysfunction particularly in diabetics. It is also used in treating pulmonary hypertension, high altitude pulmonary oedema and Raynaud's phenomena.

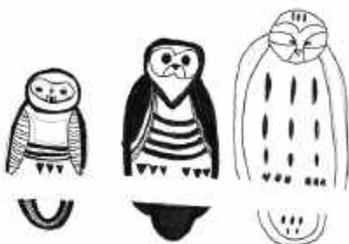
There were many lessons to be learned from this serendipitous discovery. First, be alert to unexpected observations especially when they do not fit with what is expected or predicted. Second, pursue what you believe in, even when others are unconvinced.

Peter S Ringrose MA PhD was SVP Global Drug Discovery, Pfizer 1982-1996, President Pharmaceutical Research Institute, Princeton NJ and CSO Bristol-Myers Squibb NY 1997-2002, Chair Biotechnology Biosciences Research Council (BBSRC) 2003-2009.

Gratitude.

The 'Virtual' needs the real
When it answers our appeal
From the Members cut adrift
Locked down, and left bereft;
So as the Office works to heal,
And the words and music lift,
With each week another gift,
The gratitude we feel
While virtual – is real.

Malcolm Bishop



Dr Tim Chambers, 1995

Doctors on the floor

My career as a clinical examiner in under- and postgraduate medicine extended from its steeplechasing days to dressage; Claret and roast at luncheon to bottled tap water and sandwiches. Helping lame dogs over stiles also provided a rich source of anecdote.

One morning, long ago, at the well-known medical examination hall in Queen Square, renowned for the doughnuts served to examiners with morning coffee, I was conducting vivas for a non-university qualifying exam with a senior and distinguished London physician whose *de haute en bas* demeanour made me wonder if I was being examined.

Enter a candidate: worldly, urbane, wearing a, pin striped suit and buttonhole and carrying the Financial Times. Unquestionably a Grimsdyke*, from one of those London teaching hospitals of which it was said 'you can tell a XXX's man, but you can't tell him how much.' I passed him an electrocardiogram trace showing ventricular fibrillation** and asked what he would do if I developed that arrhythmia. He scrutinised it; turned it both upside down and overleaf, hoping for a scribbled clue, and, with effortless confidence, pronounced:

"I would advise you to take it easy sir."

We were interrupted by the sound of my colleague tumbling from his chair. He had been leaning backwards - boredom? - until his chortled reaction to the candidate's answer propelled him past the pivot point.

As a rule of thumb a candidate was likely to fail if they killed the patient; killing both examiners was irredeemable. (In longer retrospect I wonder now if his recommendation was quite inspired).

**A character in Richard Gordon's book Doctor in the House. His elderly relative paid him a generous annuity for the time he was a medical student. Little incentive, therefore, to qualify.*

***A cardiac arrhythmia leading to fatal cardiac arrest unless reversed promptly.*

Dr Timothy Chambers was a consultant general and renal physician at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Bristol, until his retirement in 2010.

Nick Lanyon, 2010

Cardiovascular Harm

To render my temperament calm,	And risk, at my age,
I whistle the Twenty-Third Psalm:	Of cardiovascular harm.
It guards me from rage	

Imagination can burst out from the bonds of Evidence

My own position is quite clear: I am a materialist while being a scientist but a mathematical realist when being a speculator (what the conventional call 'a philosopher'). Materialism, the view that the fundamental particles and the forces that bind them into interesting entities such as atoms and people, are all that is necessary to account for all the properties of the world, including beliefs held by the superstitious (whom the conventional call 'the religious') that there is more to it than that. Scientists are hewers of simplicity from complexity: they chip away at the world around them, seeking to reveal the ultimate entities and at the same time stand in delight at the complexity that their interactions can yield and result in the glories of the natural world. They are awed, but not snookered by awe: instead, they are stimulated to try to understand, preferring to do so on this side of the grave rather than presuming that enlightenment will come, together with bliss, once they are dead and then being unable to realise that they have left it too late. This reductionist program is the easy part. Much more difficult is the reverse journey, the assemblist program, from the identified simplicities up to the emergent properties that give us the natural world, up to and including consciousness and all its attributes, such as self-awareness and aesthetic and moral judgement.

As a speculator, thought need have no bounds. Imagination can burst out from the bonds of evidence. The speculator can wonder whether there is something beyond the material and from which the material springs. Is there an inner lining to the fabric of reality? Speculation is merely speculation, but might mature into science one day if evidence is accrued that supports it.

Speculation, though, need not be entirely free to fly unbounded and undirected. It can notice hints, fleeting hints that might one day be pinned down and become regarded as evidence. There are engaging hints around us that are perhaps too obvious to be noticed. One hint is that there is only one dimension of time: why is each day identified by a single date and not two or more? I think I know, but will set it aside for this contribution. I mention it simply to alert you to noticing, and then maybe reflecting on, the perhaps hitherto unnoticed obvious.

Another hint more pertinently suggests that there is nothing here at all, which if true, would certainly resolve the problem of why the age-old problem of why there is something rather than nothing. Take electric charge. There are obviously positive and negative electric charge (for instance, of protons and electrons, respectively), but the total charge of the universe is zero. How do we know that? Because the strength of the interaction between

charges is so much greater than the strength of gravity, that any imbalance of charge would result in the universe being blasted apart as soon as it was formed. There would have been no opportunity for gravity to bind entities into galaxies, stars, and planets. More contentiously, I think it possible to argue that there is no energy in the universe (with mass being another manifestation of energy, through $E = mc^2$). Yes, there are positive and negative contributions to the total energy, but I suspect that the total is zero, just like the total charge.

So, my first speculation is that, despite appearances, there is nothing here at all. At least, there is net nothing. At the event we call the 'Creation' absolutely nothing (not even spacetime) turned into a more interesting form of nothing, where opposites became distinguished. Such a speculation greatly simplifies, without solving of course, the problem of what happened at the Creation. I think it much easier to understand the origin of a heap if it is next to a hole than to account for a heap alone. Science proceeds like that, perhaps viewing a speculation as a starting point for confirmation. In this case the speculation that there is net nothing here simplifies the problem that has to be solved. No longer do we have to ask where it all came from: there isn't any net 'it'. How absolutely nothing slipped into being its very much more interesting variation is an entirely different question, for the answer to which these margins, as Fermat wisely and perhaps suspiciously said, are too small to accommodate.

The other hint perhaps worth noting is the extraordinary aptness of mathematics for describing the physical world. This aptness has given rise to some speculation. In some areas science can proceed, though hobbled, without mathematics. One of the grandest theories of all, Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, was formulated without mathematics (it has, nevertheless, been enriched by mathematical development). On the other hand, fundamental physical theories, such as quantum mechanics and general relativity, would not exist without mathematics. Their combination, when it is achieved, will be mathematical and probably paradigm-shifting. The great transitions from mediaeval gropings to modern physical science due to Galileo and then Newton were essentially the injection of mathematics into the bloodstream of our understanding.

It might be that mathematics 'works' merely because it is an emotion-free, logical device for the unfolding of the consequences of a speculation that has evolved into a putative theory. Perhaps its aptness has no deeper significance. But could it be that its aptness springs from a structural resonance. Could it be that mathematics is the universe, and that our feeble scratchings at the surface of phenomena are exposing this deep structure of reality? There are hints that this deep structuralism, this resonant correspondence of the world of appearance and the world of mathematics, might be a profitable speculation. For instance, it

is possible to create the integers from the empty set (essentially absolutely nothing), and once you have the integers then, as Kronecker once indicated, by making them do things for which they were not originally intended, you have mathematics. Thus the rich fabric of mathematics springs from the empty set, just as the present universe sprang from absolutely nothing.

But how does mathematics become tangible. We inhabit, we think, a world of tangible objects. How can that be, if the world is a very advanced kind of arithmetic? I have no idea; but I can speculate.

All perception, I think, amounts to touch. Touch is obviously touch, and relies on sensors in the skin that respond to the presence of incident matter. Hearing is touch: the impact of the molecules of air on the diaphragm of the ear and its onward transmission into the brain. Taste and smell are touch: they arise from molecules fitting into receptors, and fitting in is essentially touching. Vision less obviously is touch, but touch it is. In its case, light that enters an eye causes a change in shape of molecule in the retina. That change of shape results in the molecule no longer being able to sit in the pocket of a protein: fitting in is touch again. The molecule is expelled, and the resulting change in shape of that protein initiates a signal to the brain. Within the mysterious, dark caverns of the brain, these different touches are interpreted as different varieties of perception that we consider to be touch itself, hearing, taste, smell, and sight.

Where does touch stem from? It stems from the inability of one piece of matter to occupy the same space as another piece of matter. And from where does that inability spring? It springs from the deep quantum mechanical principle known as the Pauli principle, a mathematical statement relevant to the structure of all matter. So touch, and therefore all perception, springs from mathematics. I realise that this account of perception and sensation might raise more questions than it answers, and will leave no one with a visceral sense of comprehension; but within it there might be a hint about our ability to perceive mathematics as matter.

Science elucidates wonders. Speculation wonders about elucidation. Maybe, perhaps, who knows, speculation might on occasion by chance light on truth.

Peter Atkins is a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford and emeritus professor of physical chemistry in the University of Oxford. His research was in theoretical chemistry, but much of his career has been spent writing books. These books, which currently number over 70, include university-level textbooks and books on science for the general public. He has acted as chairman of the Talk Dinner Committee.

Sir Oliver Shewell Franks, 1984
Later Baron Franks, OM, GCMG, KCB, CBE, PC, DL

What do you most wish for at Christmas?

Oliver Franks was appointed Ambassador to the USA in 1948. Before his first Christmas in Washington, leading Ambassadors were asked by a US radio station 'what each most wishes for Christmas'. The French Ambassador's request was 'peace throughout the world'. The Russian Ambassador replied 'freedom for all people enslaved by imperialism'. Oliver's reply after a short pause stole the show and was reproduced immediately worldwide: 'it's very kind of you to ask. I'd quite like a box of crystallised fruit'.

Oliver Franks was educated at Bristol Grammar School, Queen's College, Oxford and was Provost of Worcester College 1962-76. He was Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow and from 1946-48 Provost of Queen's College Oxford. From 1939-1945 he was the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Supply, occupied in replacing supplies after Dunkirk and the heavy losses of shipping in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Sandor Vaci

A Punchline in the Police Station

During my early years of studying architecture I was encouraged by the illustrations in Sir Banister Fletcher's History of Architecture to go and see the great English cathedrals. To save money I hitchhiked over weekends. One of those trips took me to Winchester. The evening came and it was too late to get back to London. The local YMCA was full. Staying at a hotel was out of question. Someone told me that the police occasionally allowed students to kip in the cells. With my newly found confidence I marched into Winchester Police Station where the sergeant laughed at the idea. I suggested then that if I punched him on the nose he would have to arrest me and lock me up in a cell. He stood up, all six feet six inches of him, and said slowly without amusement 'I don't think that is very good idea, sir!'. So there was a limit to the English sense of humour.

Empires in Collision in 2016

When this book was first drafted the world price of crude oil (Brent Crude) stood at \$110 per barrel. Long before a second draft it had fallen to the \$30-40 range. At the time of writing no-one knows where the price might go, how long this fall in price will persist, whether it will go further or bounce back. Pundits can be found for every price level a year ahead from \$75 a barrel to \$25 or even lower.

But the impact across the world is enormous. Cheaper oil has already curbed Vladimir Putin's Russian ambitions, sent Venezuela into a tail-spin, undermined Scotland's independence hopes, created unease throughout the oil-rich Middle East, adding to its political woes, and put numerous major energy projects into cold storage.

For those seeking to shift the world's energy production to lower carbon and greener methods it has put new pressures on renewable energy technologies, including the low-carbon nuclear power, to cut costs drastically and become more competitive with fossil fuels; and it has made the swelling subsidies they currently require harder to justify. For the USA, which seemed to have found the nirvana of energy self-sufficiency in home-grown and soaring shale oil and shale gas production, (itself a large cause of the world oil price drop) the sudden collapse has blown the froth off their energy 'revolution'.

The conclusion began to emerge, obscured and fuzzy at first but assuming frighteningly hard lines that in the energy world we were drifting into a bitter and costly war, in almost accidental style like the First World War, which nobody wanted, which would achieve nobody's aims and which neither side could possibly win – a war between the long entrenched world of fossil fuels and the oncoming juggernaut of renewable energy determined to uproot and destroy it ...

Notable and disturbing is the strangely schizophrenic way in which governments in developed countries try to dodge between the rival forces - grandly committing to low-carbon targets in the name of climate action, and to the phasing out of all fossil fuels, as in the recent 'historic' Paris Agreement - a trend which is proclaimed as 'unstoppable', 'inevitable', 'irresistible'.

Meanwhile in reality oil, gas and coal developments roar ahead across the planet. It is estimated that a trillion dollars a year is currently being committed to expansion of all hydrocarbons, even while Western political leaders talk of halting coal-burning and a post-oil age. The alliance between the hydrocarbon and green worlds we pleaded for back in 2007 has failed to materialise. On the contrary; the antagonists have greatly intensified.

But is it all necessary? Do these 'two empires - the global fossil fuel industries and- the worldwide green, low-carbon cause - have inevitably to be in conflict and at war about the

future? Do they even understand and respect each other's views? Or would they be far more effective if they were united in common purpose

Editor's Note

These extracts are taken from the preface of Empires in Collision – The Green versus Black Struggle for our Energy Future by Lord Howell of Guildford PC published by Gilgamesh Publishing, London in 2016. Lord Howell has been Chairman of the Windsor Energy Group since 2005 and was previously President of the British Institute of Energy Economics for nine years.

Professor Henry Mayr-Harting, 2001

Persistent Passions – Organs

One afternoon in early July 1959, I was a History graduate student, practising the organ in Merton College Chapel. It was a two-manual organ with the console on the floor in the middle of the transept, with the pipes behind it. Thus, the organist looked like the driver of a double-decker bus and was very conspicuous. An Italian man in his fifties came over, told me he was an organist from Rome, and that he was in England because his daughter, an opera singer, was singing at Glyndebourne. He asked me to play something for him. So I played the prelude of the Prelude and Fugue in C Major (BWV 545), a glorious purple splash of sound with plenty to do on the pedal. I thought I had played it quite well, but he said, "Ah yeass, eetees after lanch and no one can play after lanch."

I asked if he would like a go. He replied, "I have dee wrong shoes on." But with the freshness of youth I said, 'Go on, be a devil.' He tried the stops and then he played the exposition of the fugue in D major, BWV 532, a work I knew I could never get my hands and feet around in a month of Sundays. It was obvious that I was in the presence of a consummate master. Six weeks later I learned that this was Fernando Germani, at that time considered one of the two or three greatest organists in the world.

Henry Mayr-Harting is Emeritus Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Oxford.



Editor's Note

**Elda Brizuela of Costa Rica –
An Environmentalist well ahead of her time**

I met a Saint the other day
At a seminar on oil
She spoke quite well
As you might expect
On natural things
On human happiness
On universal peace
On trees and fish and whales
And deep-sea drilling rights

From noon to noon
In a single day and night
She listened, talked and talked
And also laughed and cried

What had been, I thought
A superficial chat
Became a one-day tour
Covering several billion years
Two millennia of history
And sixty years of life

Saints, you know,
Are random souls
They do not seem to sleep
They pack a lot around
A steady stream of miracles
They roam from place to place

And time to time
Fulfilling their agenda
They never let you know
What they are planning next ...

My saint was well-equipped
With camera and recorder
She wrote things down
In a little book
Using a lead pencil
Sharpened with a knife
Noting place and time and date
She picked up berries, flowers
And feathers which she attached
To a battered straw hat
Images, she said,
To stick together later ...

Now she has gone
Into the Western sky
Far out over the ocean
Among the brighter stars.

What a lot of hydrocarbon
I reflected to myself
Is burnt up each day and night
To protect dear Mother Earth
And keep her birds in flight ...

Elda Brizueala is one of the most remarkable people I have ever met. Who but Elda could persuade the Colonel of the Household Cavalry, after a chance acquaintance of 30 minutes, to take the salutes from the rostrum at the Dress Rehearsal of Beating the Retreat on Horse Guards Parade? He was waiting near Buckingham Palace after a bomb alert for the All Clear and the order for all his troops to proceed along the Mall. He was riding a fine black horse which had taken a more than friendly interest in Elda and probably in her bountiful supply of small treats for horses that she carried for such occasions.

Within the wildlife world of David Attenborough, Elda is most famous for her films and studies of the so-called “fresh-water” sharks of Lake Nicaragua, with which she swims happily whenever she can.

The first time I met her was a week-long gathering at the University of Durham of mainly senior lawyers and bankers. It was clear there was a good living to be made from Boundary Issues and Disputes in the Cross-Border International Development of Oil and Gas. About once an hour, the official representative of Costa Rica stood up, discarding a few layers of upper garments and whirling them round her head, speaking slowly “What about the fish? They know no boundaries. What about all the animals in the border forests? What chance have they to protect their own lives?”

During the week, she asked if I could accompany her to meet the Dean of Durham Cathedral to discuss her new film about the life of St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. He would be free after evensong on the Saturday. We emerged about midnight. I mentioned that I had missed the last train to London. “No matter”, she said, “I will drive you home to Greenwich”.

During another visit, we brought Elda as our guest to the annual St Cecilia Concert in the Athenæum. In her thankyou-note for the visit she said:

*“It wasn’t just the wonderful music coming straight from the heart.
It was all those Members coming to listen and to talk happily and seriously together”.*

In 26 well-chosen words, she had, as usual, said it all.

The verse extract is taken from a 635-line personal record in rough verse of that first meeting in 1996. It is followed by twenty pages of prose devoted to equally extraordinary events on Elda’s subsequent visits to stay with us in Greenwich.

Editor's Note - More Basil Hone cartoons

Part17 devoted to The Athenæum and the Bank of England was distributed to members on Friday 31 July. It resulted in a large number of requests for more Basil Hone cartoons. In response, the following cartoons all appeared first in *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street* 1921-2007 (over 300 in total) and then in the first three volumes of *The Bank of England Bedside Book* 1694-2018.



"Remind me to have a word with Smith about his Christmas leave rota."



"I wanted to be promoted beyond my capacity like everyone else."



"Friday 16th, Conference with Gulf State Finance Ministers; Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th, redecorate the bathroom..."



"We can't quite decide whether to make you an Advanced Trainee or offer you an early pension."



"Would you agree that the Bank is uncommunicative, tight-lipped and taciturn?"

"No comment."



Crisis Management in the Bank of England

"One thing about committees, they take your mind off the work."



Now get out there and WIN



"Sometimes I think he doesn't panic in a crisis and sometimes I think he doesn't give a damn."



"They say you'll feel better next year..."



"Look here Benson. As economists we expect a certain amount of conformity as far as dress and appearance are concerned."

Tom Foulkes, 2003

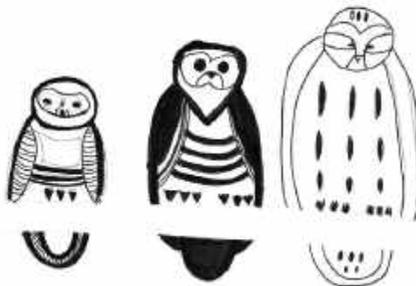
On the Power of Ideas **A Tribute to the Reverend Professor M A Screech 1926-2018**

Thirty years ago, the Reverend Professor Michael Screech (member-1990) presented the English-speaking world with his magisterial translation of Montaigne's 'Complete Essays'. Ever since, it has been hailed as a masterpiece of modern literature for which we owe him an immense debt of gratitude. Without it, people like me would have been unlikely to encounter that extraordinary Frenchman, whose whole life was informed by doubt, introspection and critical enquiry.

I never met Michael Screech. Sadly, he died on the very day (1st June 2018) I started to pen a much-delayed letter of thanks. I wish I had acted sooner. Beyond his renown as a Renaissance academic of the highest order, he was also generous, convivial and irreverent. I imagine he felt very much at home in the Athenaeum.

Screech's prose is light and witty. His scholarship illuminates Montaigne's Stoic Epicureanism and his courageous fight against prejudice and fatalism. It celebrates the wisdom of his Pyrrhonian Scepticism. It enables us to share Montaigne's delight in lust and bodily functions, alongside his equanimity at self-contradiction and volte-face. Screech's notes reveal how Montaigne imported ideas from all over the classical world to create a "big bunch of other men's flowers", bound only by Montaigne's unique commentary. Gradually, I realised the same approach could enrich my own work in engineering. Such is the power of ideas.

Screech and Montaigne were both men of good cheer, good sense and good intent. Both created rich relationships with their readers. Both would probably agree that no occupation is so sweet as scholarship. I wish I could have sat between them at the Club table, where what matters most is not what you eat but who you eat it with. What a feast that would have been.



Anthony JT Williams, 1975

Clashing Cultures

This episode goes back some eighty years to my adolescence in wartime Sheffield, where I lived with my parents when not away at boarding school. In 1943, I invited a friend to come to tea at my home at 4 o'clock. His family had long been living in Sheffield; mine were newcomers from the South. Our pot of tea, perhaps with sandwiches, biscuits or cake, was normal under war rationing. After tea, we sat there and waited. Conversation wilted. The reality was that what my friend was waiting for was the tea in the sense frequently used in the North of England, but rarely in the South, at least among the middle class. In the North, 'tea', or 'afternoon tea', might fill the gap till real tea came along but could not replace it. Tea usually happened in the North around 6 to 6.30 when the workers generally got home, often the main family meal of the day, with such as cold meat, pork pies, salad, crumpets, cake, even perhaps cooked dishes with eggs, sausages and potatoes, then fruit pies, other fruit desserts or 'sweets'. For my Sheffield friend, our tea at 4.30 was a mere appetiser to precede what he expected later. In the event, all concluded satisfactorily thanks to the calm diplomacy employed by my mother. My friend stayed on to have a 'supper' with us at 7.30 and left at 9.00.

A Club Complaint

Toasted tea cakes, dripping butter
"How delish" I hear you mutter
But alas! our pleasure's marred
Paper napkins now are barred...

...O poetaster, cease your mutter
No paper napkins reappear;
Instead they've cut down on the butter
And all they give us now's a smear

from the Club Book, 25 May 1976



Jonathan Ball, 1985

Sir David Hunt and General Gordon

The inestimable Sir David Hunt (d 1998) Chairman of our Trustees, combined the gravitas of the first winner of the BBC's Mastermind Of Masterminds, having served as private secretary to Winston Churchill, with a twinkle that gave salt and pepper to his fund of storytelling, mostly relating to his diplomatic career experiences.

One such topically reminds us brouhahas over the removal of statues is nothing new..... Over a Club dinner one evening David explained how an imposing General Gordon sat on his camel adorned the banks of the Nile at Khartoum from 1904 until the political imperatives of the time demanded its removal in 1958, shortly after Sudan achieved independence.....

.....an early career British diplomat on project secondment to Khartoum from King Charles Street in the mid 1950's secured dispensation that each afternoon he could have time off in order to meet his young son from school, and they would walk together down the riverbank and say hello to Gordon. The final day of secondment brought a poignancy to the farewell stroll. As they turned homewards for the last time the young lad turned to his dad and said.....'I know what I keep meaning to ask you.....what is the name of the chap on Gordon!'

Jonathan Ball MBE AADip RIBA FRSA Hon FRIAS Co Founder, The Eden Project, Architect and Writer.

Editor's Note – A Big Thank You

Finally, may I thank all our contributors of the 287 pages in these 20 Parts containing 278 separate contributions. Also a special thank you to the Secretary for sound advice as well as to Christina Hemmett and the Secretariat for processing and distributing the 20 weekly Parts on time between March and September 2020. As well as these thanks to my two wonderful assistants, Kitty Carruthers and Emma Parsons who over the last 25 years have been vital in producing this collection for the Athenæum as well as similar hard backs, memoirs and views for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the MECAS Association, Bank of England Threadneedle Club and the British Institute of Energy Economics, the Windsor Energy Group and the International Association of Energy Economics.

In Greenwich we also produced booklets and guides for the National Maritime Museum, Borough of Greenwich, Brockley Society and London River Commuters Association (LORICA).

Professor Jeremy Black, 2007

The Prospect for the Press

The end of once-great titles and the shadowed circulation of the rest suggests no benign prospect for the press, and its demise has been widely anticipated. The newspaper industry is characterised by a high level of operating gearing in Britain (usually referred to as operating leverage in the United States), with profits very sensitive to a change in sales due to the high nature of fixed costs.

Extrapolating from the present model provides scant basis for optimism, but the combination of technological innovations, entrepreneurial activity, and the impact of social change on reader preferences, makes it less likely that the past is a reasonable model. Moreover, the history of the press has been one of frequent change, and notably so from the 1850s. There are quantifiable indices of change that can encourage marked disquiet, notably number of titles, which is an index of the diversity of views, and the number of journalists, which is significant due to the maintenance of talents. Yet, ultimately the question becomes one of definition: is the hardcopy element more, or as significant, as that of news? Probably not. Far from being a formulaic product and practice, the 'paper;' is already read by many online, and there is no reason why that process should not develop further.

The revenue stream to support salaries, however, is under continuing challenge from changes in circulation and advertising; and that does not encourage a benign look across to the model of Social Media. Grounded in a free-enterprise, commercial society, the press is both an aspect of it and shares in its rapid changes; as well as in parallel shifts in political culture. In each case, there are serious challenges for media outlets seeking to cater for a broad range, the sole exception being the BBC, and it is a sad comment on the present media landscape that newspapers go bankrupt while the BBC enjoys a very significant amount of in effect public money. Indeed, possibly, the best solution to funding crises in other media formats would be to redistribute the License Fee, for example to Times' Radio and other such bodies, or to abolish the Fee; but it is difficult to see such radicalism in prospect. Instead, the hope has to be a reliance on the high quality and reputation, both national and international, of existing newspaper titles and their staff, and the resulting opportunities to explore new markets at home and worldwide. The potential for new methods of production and delivery continue to expand, and the quality of journalism offers a security in the *mélange* of digital material. There is both opportunity and problem here, the latter that of providing salaries not least for investigative journalism. The need for the latter is highlighted both by the extent to which the media in many other countries has been taken over by the state, and by the valuable role of such journalism in holding institutions to account.

So, to add on a reflection that will not please some other contributors. Given the context of finite funds, we should be moving away from the anachronism of a state broadcaster and using that money to support other aspects of culture and media, notably those that are

innovative in content and outcome-orientated, rather than focusing on legacy platforms. The latter is a reference to Defence equipment, and the same need to engage with linking quality in provision, nimbleness in structure and an engagement with developing needs can be seen across much of British society, not least Higher Education and Defence. Deluging moribund structures in cash is no way forward.

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The Athenæum Question Book

Who said or wrote, and where:

When the angels play for God they play Bach, when they play for themselves they play Mozart? – Nigel Legg, 3 April 2003

Answers: Does the quotation not continue: and God listens at the door? – unsigned reply
Yes, this is Barth's little Book on Mozart – JM Ross

What would be a modern equivalent of the New Testament relationship of Jesus as a shepherd and his people as his sheep? – Kristopher Frey, 30 April 1983

I believe that missionaries to the Eskimo, realising that "the Lamb of God" would have no meaning, spoke of "The Baby Seal of God" – Hugh Ryan

Answers: *Should not those who smoke cigars, cigarettes be confined to one end of this room?*
or to some inner darkness? – Jonathan Wright, 22 September 1994
I would prefer outer darkness – Geoffrey Jennings

I would be grateful if any member could give me information about, and if possible, reference to The Ladies' Athenæum?

Answer: I have a letter from Nellie Melba from The Ladies' Athenæum, 31, Dover Street, London W which would date from about 1910 – Jonathan Ruffer

Was not the Club founded in 1824? Why then does the crockery bear the inscription MDCCXXIV – Dunn-Meynall, 29 July 1987

Answer: Perhaps because we have been disnumerous. Or do we have a fetish about no.7 – see the staircase clock – Brian Locke

What is the origin of this delightful book? Keith Evans, 03 July 1985

Answers: It was the idea of Miss Penhaligan, Club Librarian, who was being asked so many questions she could not answer.
To oblige her I broke the ice and inserted the first question in the book – JM Ross 08 July 1985

Editor's Note

Today, we launch a new request to all Members. If you feel from your past experience and present convictions, you have something to say, please answer the following question:

"How best can the UK most rapidly regain and retain its global pre-eminence?"

Here are some starters. Suggest any other categories you wish and do please let us have the texts+ 4-line cv as soon as you can:

CHARACTERISTICS

EFFICIENCY

XENOGAMY

CO-OPERATIVITY

ECCENTRICITY

LONGSTANDING FREEDOM

LUMPENPROLETARIAT

EXEMPLARY ACHIEVEMENT

NEUTRALITY

CONSISTENCY

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

EVIDENCE

ARTS AND MUSIC

THEATRE AND FILM

HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL RESEARCH

ENGINEERING AND DESIGN

NOVELS AND POETRY

ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION

EXPORT CAPACITY

UNIVERSITIES

MARINE, AIR AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY

Ends: The Long- and Short-Term Objectives

The absolute deadline for contributions is 31 December 2020. Word range: 100-1000.

