



THE PROBUS LINK

PROBUS BRAMPTON CENTRAL-PEEL
Communicating with our members since 1998

**APRIL
2010**

ISSUE 127

"The purpose of Probus is to stimulate thought, interest and participation in activities at a time in life when it is easy to become complacent and self-centered."

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Next General Meeting: April 21st , 2010



World War II Operation Pied Piper evacuees from an inner-city school in Deptford, in London, have fun on a lake in Wales. Their teacher was evacuated with them. But was it like that for all of the kids? For more information refer to the story on page 3

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR by Sheila O'Donoghue

April Shower Brings Fay Flowers

Yes, Spring has Sprung. And once again it's time to think about fertilizing the lawn--or paving the visitor's parking lot. Or perhaps it's time to think about new ways of thinking about old things.....

It is good to remember that the tea kettle, although up to its neck in hot water, continues to sing.

Although the tongue weighs very little, few people are able to hold it.

A person's true character is revealed by what he does when no one is watching.

Your companions are like the buttons on an elevator. They will either take you up or they will take you down.

People know what you are by what they see, not by what they hear.

Our days are identical suitcases--all the same size--but some people can pack more into them than others.

And finally...If there were no such thing as bears, what kind of hugs would we give?

FELLOWSHIP by Ann Crane

It seems that with the departure of winter, the health of our members is reasonably good, so there is nothing to report this month!!!!

PROGRAM by Donna Collingham

For April 21st, Dov Altman is our guest speaker. Dov's topic is Alzheimers and some bio-tech breakthroughs. Mr. Altman is Executive Vice President of the Canadian Friends of Bar-Ilan University. He is acknowledged as an outstanding speaker.

EVENTS by Sheila O'Donoghue

Monday, June 21, 2010. Spring Fling by Motor Coach. Our magic carpet departs at **9:00 am** from the **Lawn Bowling parking lot** beside Century Gardens. Our first destination is **beautiful Allan Gardens** in downtown Toronto. These gardens have been of **botanical importance since 1858**. After strolling through the Gardens we will re-board the coach where **Mike Filey** will entertain us with an **interactive discussion of Toronto sights**, as we continue to **The Old Mill**.

After a delicious **buffet lunch** we will motor on to Toronto's west-end **High Park** and **Colborne Lodge**. There we'll receive a guided tour of the gardens and the Lodge, which was the 19th century home of the High Park founders--John and Gemima Howard. Some of Mr. Howard's watercolours of early Toronto, along with some

original furnishings and artifacts are to be seen in the Lodge. We'll enjoy an **included cup of cider**, and return to Brampton about **5:30 pm**.

Cost: \$84.00 pp, including taxes, driver's gratuity.

Wednesday, July 21, 2010. Circle this date on your calendar for our **Annual Barbecue!** Details will be released in our May newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP by Doug Potts

Our membership continues to be maxed out at 120 members with no one on the waiting list

GOLFING MEMORIES by Herb Hall

A thought occurred to me recently..... a memory of fun times past.... several years ago, John Munster organized regular golf outings for interested members at the Derrydale course. It was always a relaxing, fun experience with none of the tensions and pressures to excel that frequently go with playing a round of golf. As time marched inexorably along (or was it the ravages of time?) the course seemed to get longer and the need for a cart became more pronounced. The group became smaller until it stopped. Ah, but back to the memory..... how about if we were to put out the call for interested Probus members to join in for a round of golf at Derrydale one fine weekday in the near future. This would be a relaxed, fun round.... and I would call it the **John Munster Memorial Round**. Please let me know if you would like to join in...call or email me and I will set it up. If you received the LINK by email, simply reply to the covering email! Derrydale is now a 12 hole executive course, par 40

When: Tuesday morning, May 4th, 10:00AM (this could change depending on preferences)

Where: Derrydale Golf, 185 Derry Rd. West

Cost for Seniors: \$20 plus \$ 8 for a cart

THE CHILDREN OF WORLD WAR II by Herb Hall (information for this story came from the History Learning site and Wikipedia)

This story recounts, in condensed form, the experiences thrust upon tens of thousands of Britain's children during World War II. Its inclusion in the LINK is inspired by at least two of our members who lived it, and the memories for them are indeed painful to this day. I beg their forgiveness for stirring up these memories, but I felt events such as these must not be lost to history. It would have been too difficult to expect to include their personal experiences herein, but I hope through this story you can imagine what they went through.

Children were massively affected by World War Two. Nearly two million children were evacuated from their homes at the start of the War; children had to endure rationing, gas mask lessons, living with strangers etc. Children accounted for one in ten of the deaths during the Blitz of London from 1940 to 1941.



World War Two was the first war where Britain itself was the target of concentrated and sustained attacks by an enemy. For Britain, the war commenced officially in September 1939, with their declaration of war on Germany following the invasion of Poland. However, hostilities on British soil were delayed until April 1940 as Germany marched across Europe and they were ready to tackle England. At this point, Germany bombed primarily military targets and the Battle of Britain started.

Britain prevailed in this fight during the summer and autumn of 1940, precipitating cancellation of the Nazi's 'Operation Sea Lion', which would have seen Britain assaulted from the seas. Then, the only way Germany could get at mainland Britain was to bomb it from the air. The Blitz ensued with the sustained bombing of the country from September 1940 until May 1941.

One of the main events that indirectly affected Britain's children during the war occurred a couple of years prior to the war. Germany had started rearmament in the mid '30's and was anxious to test their newfound killing capabilities. During the Spanish Civil war in 1937, they had an opportunity to do so in the bombing of Guernica, a town with a normal population of about 5,000 in Spain. This was done in support of the Italian Fascist movement headed by Benito Mussolini. The bombing, which employed new and more destructive techniques, such as carpet bombing, took place on a Market Day when the population would be higher than normal with people coming into town from the surrounding area to attend the market. It caused widespread destruction and civilian deaths and firmly established the world view that terror bombings targeting civilians had become a component of the Luftwaffe strategy. Virtually all buildings in the town were demolished in a single day and the population was decimated.

With the memory of Guernica in mind, and in anticipation of the coming hostilities, on August 31st, 1939, the British government issued the order "Evacuate Forthwith", and 'Operation Pied Piper' was started the very next day. The objective was to move as many children as possible out of six major cities considered vulnerable to reduce the injury and death that would surely be wrought upon the children should Germany mount assaults on these areas.



The impact of evacuation on children depended to an extent on which social strata they were in at the time. Parents who had access to money invariably made their own arrangements. Children at private schools based in the cities tended to move out to manor houses in the countryside where children at that school could be, in the main, kept together. But 1.9 million children gathered at rail stations in early September not knowing where they were going nor if they would be separated from brothers and sisters who had gathered with them.



‘Operation Pied Piper’ was a huge undertaking. Six cities had been deemed vulnerable to German bombing, and in London alone there were 1,589 assembly points for children to gather at before they were moved on. Those children who were evacuated were given a stamped postcard to send from their billet address to inform their parents where they were. The plan was to move 3.5 million children in three days. Actually, there were some 1.9 million who were evacuated which was a remarkable achievement. Some children ended up staying with their parents as evacuation was not compulsory.

With such numbers involved, it was to be expected that some children would have a smooth passage to their reception area while some would not. The town of Anglesey expected 625 children to arrive and 2,468 did. Pwllheli, North Wales, was not allocated any evacuees – and 400 turned up. Children already

experiencing a stressful situation were put in an even more difficult situation. Elsewhere, children who had been used to being in school in the same class were split up. The image on the cover was not the experience of many.

“I have had few worse hours in my life than those I spent watching the school being taken off in drizzling rain and gathering gloom to those unknown villages, knowing I was powerless to do anything about it.”

Dorothy King, teacher

What impact this had on the children involved was not extensively studied at the time as the government simply wanted to label Evacuation as an overwhelming success. That some children continued their education in pubs, church halls or anywhere else there was the space to accommodate them was seen as an unfortunate and inevitable result of a strategy that had been forced on the government.

The clash of cultures experienced by many children was also difficult. The children from the cities had been tarred by a reputation that was undeserved – but many of those in rural England expected children to be riddled with parasites and to engage in anti-social behaviour. Such was the perception at the time.

“I noticed a woman looking at evacuees’ hair and opening their mouths, but one of the helpers said, “They might come from the East End, but they’re children, not animals.”

R Baker, evacuee from Bethnal Green.

However, many mothers brought their children home during the ‘Phoney War’ when it seemed clear that the danger of bombing had been exaggerated. By January 1940, about 60% of all evacuees had returned to their home and the bombing had not yet started. The return of these children was not in the government’s plan. Many schools remained shut in city centres and a social problem occurred that had no obvious cure – so-called ‘dead-end kids’ who were left unsupervised for most of the day as their fathers were away with the military and their mothers were at work in the factories. It is difficult to know whether this problem was overstated or not but while these children remained in city centres they were a potential casualty of German bombing which had started. London was obviously targeted during the Blitz, but other cities were also badly bombed – Plymouth and Coventry being obvious examples. In London, ‘trekkers’ took their children out of the centre at night (during the Blitz) and went to the nearest open ground that might represent safety. The government did not recognize the existence of ‘trekkers’ as their understandable response to bombing did not fit in with the ‘stiff upper lip’ that the government portrayed in their propaganda films. An American film ‘Britain Can Take It’ represented Londoners as people with huge resolve, but, the reality was different.

By the end of 1941, city centres, especially London, became somewhat safer. Life for children regained a degree of monotony. Rationing ensured that everyone got their food. Life could never be normal in a wartime situation but the fear of gas attacks had all but vanished and the attacks by the Luftwaffe were becoming a memory. Though cinemas were meant to be shut, many opened.

The seeming normality of life on the Home Front was shattered in 1944 when the first of the V1's landed. Once more, London was targeted and children were victims. The danger faced in London was greatly increased when the V2 attacks started and the casualty figures mirrored those of the Blitz.

The attacks by both V1's and V2's only ended as the Allies advanced up through Western Europe after the success of D-Day.

What damage did the war do to those children who survived it? This is difficult to know as physical damage was visible and could be dealt with, but the psychological damage some must have suffered was difficult to measure – even if anybody had tried to do it. In the immediate aftermath of VE Day and VJ Day, returning soldiers were given priority and an emphasis was placed on the return of 'family'. Children and their welfare seemed to be lower down the list of priorities – the return of a father, according to some, would be enough to restore classic family virtues to society. Psychological assessments were far more basic in 1945 and in the immediate years after the war. 'Pulling yourself together' and the ubiquitous 'stiff upper lip' were frequent solutions to both adult and child problems. There is also little doubt that the government wanted to portray Britain as a country that had won the war and was harvesting the benefits of it. Fragile family bases did not fit this image.

Life goes on, and those children of the war are now senior citizens who reside around the globe. Many live in Canada, and some are Probus Club members. The trauma they experienced so many years ago may still live with them.

Still today, a BBC site depicts the Evacuation as one great vacation experience for the children of the war, when it is rather obvious the experience for so many was something less.

Lest we forget.

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