



# The Probe

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Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Ottawa

August 2011, #63

## Europe Brought In-House

### Ten-minute talks

This was our fifth year of having 'In-house' talks before our July picnic, and this year the talks featured trips to Europe. Mike Charrier combined his interest in war graves with some sight-seeing in Italy. Joyce Wright described her week in Malta with references to the island's history from medieval times to WW II. Allen Taylor took us on a cruise from Kiev to Sevastopol. Joan Evan's cruise was through the Baltic from Copenhagen to St Petersburg and John Wright described the joys of train travel through northern Europe.

### Mike Charrier - Italy and War Graves

Mike took us from Pachino in Sicily where Canadian troops landed on July 10th 1943, to the Rimini Line where the Canadian Corps broke through on September 20th, 1944.



*Three headstones marking the graves of a Sergeant, a Bombardier and two Gunners of the Royal Canadian Artillery, who were killed on September 20th, 1944. One headstone has a Star of David, one has a cross and the middle one has no religious symbol.*

His journey north through Italy was illustrated by views of the countryside, categorized as 'good tank country' or 'not good tank country' and some of the picturesque towns and villages en route. In between were pictures of some of the military cemeteries which marked the Allied advance and the German retreat. All the cemeteries were well kept with flowers and decorative plantings by the headstones and manicured lawns between the rows of graves.

Mike's final slides were from Florence, including the Duomo and the bridge of shops across the Arno River.

### Joyce Wright - Malta

Joyce was obviously impressed by many things about Malta including the scenery, the history, the people and the hotel. The archipelago has always been of strategic importance and by the time the Romans took it, in 218 BC, it had already been conquered by the Phoenicians, Greeks and Carthaginians. For the next 1800 years a succession of conquerors ruled the island until the arrival of the Knights of St John in 1530. From then until the Napoleonic Wars, things were a little more stable. The British ousted the French in 1800 and Malta became a republic in 1974. The conquests each left a legacy in the language, Malti, which has a base of Arabic with about half the vocabulary being Italian or Sicilian and 20% English.



*A cruise ship runs the gauntlet of cannon as it leaves Grand Harbour, Valetta.*

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### **PROBUS' Vital Purpose ...**

**To stimulate thought, interest and participation in activities at a time in life when it is easy to become complacent and self-centered.**

In WW II, Malta was a menace to Axis supply lines between Italy and North Africa. During one period it was bombed on over 160 consecutive days. It was within a week of surrendering when a few ships of a large convoy managed to get through. (Note: A recent TV show in the series *Battlefield Mysteries* - PBS and TVO - dealt with the siege of Malta).

For a tourist in 2010, little of this is apparent. The narrow streets of the walled city of Valetta provide shade from the mid-summer sun. The predominant colour is a yellow/beige as the main building material is sandstone. Closed balconies - almost all are painted green - grace many of the buildings. The Marks & Spencer store is discretely hidden within the facades of several buildings. The glorious cathedral almost survived the bombing and is fully restored.

The balcony of the hotel room looks down on the light blue of the swimming pool, narrowly separated on one side from the deeper blue of the Mediterranean, with the colourful sunshades of the open lounge area on the other. A lovely place for vacation.

Rabbits abound.

### Allen Taylor - Ukrainian Waterways

Allen and Ruth booked their Dnepr cruise through Craig Travel and flew out of Toronto as part of a group of 22. After a two-day stopover in Budapest they flew into Kiev and joined the *MS Marshal Koshevoy*. Ruth's journal says, "Flew to Kiev. Slow getting through passport control. Got to the ship and unpacked. Met the tour director, Tamara, champagne welcome, dinner - delicious meal, far too generous."



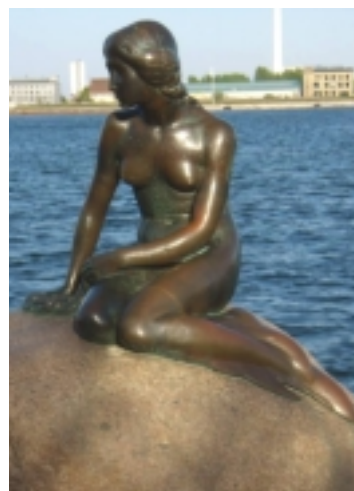
There were two days in Kiev (Kyiv on the map) which included a tour of the old city and the Pechersk Monastery - a huge complex of churches and museums where the museums are controlled by the state but the monastery has been returned to the monks. The Great (creosoted timber) Gate of Kiev was one of the sights en route.

"On subsequent days, as we sailed downriver, we were driven through the attractive city of Kremenchuk, and then went to a collective farm village (pop. 300) where we toured the primary and high schools and then the hospital: bare minimum - 4 beds to a room, no dividers, patients bring their own linen and syringes; the hospital is allowed \$4 per day per patient. Two days later we went through the Zaporozhie lock, which took us down 36 meters: the deepest lock in all of Europe. Later that day, at the Cossack Museum, we toured it and then enjoyed the Cossacks' horse show. Wow!"

Allen's great-grandfather, Lt. John Barton Taylor, took part in the siege of Sevastopol in 1855, during the Crimean War, so this was a fascinating opportunity for Allen to visit the Malenkov Battery which his great-grandfather had faced. A bus tour covered the Crimean War battlefields before re-joining the ship at Yalta. The final port of call was Odessa, on the Black Sea, where the Taylors climbed the steps made famous in Eisenstein's movie *The Battleship Potemkin*.

Allen has offered to provide information on Craig Travel and the corresponding cruise in 2011 (reverse direction).

### Joan Evans - Baltic Cruise



Joan took us from the *Little Mermaid*, now restored to her rightful place in Copenhagen harbour, to the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. Her slide-show included pictures from Stockholm, Helsinki, Warnemunde and Tallinn.

The mermaid had journeyed to Shanghai to be part of the Danish Exhibit at the World Expo 2010. Since making her

home in Copenhagen harbour in 1913 this was her first trip away - although bits have gone missing at times.

The first port of call was Warnemunde. Joan chose a photo of the Teepott and nearby lighthouse. The Teepott, built in the 1960s, looks like Calgary's Saddledome. Next, Tallinn, "It is absolutely beautiful, with a network of medieval streets, churches and dwellings so well preserved, it has earned a listing with the Unesco World Heritage as a Living Museum. There are beautiful church spires everywhere you turn, and the whole town has an incredibly quiet and very pleasant atmosphere."

The easternmost point of the cruise was St Petersburg,

with visits to the Palace of Catherine the Great and the Winter Palace which is now the Hermitage and home to over 3 million paintings. "In the evening we attended a thrilling Russian Folklore Extravaganza featuring songs and dances by a 10 piece band, dancers in traditional costumes and a male choir of 16 in military uniform. It was magical."

One of the most unusual churches in the world is the Rock Church in Helsinki. Named not for its music but because it was blasted out of solid rock. The inside is circular and the dome is made of copper. Except when standing in front of the entrance the only part visible above ground is the dome.

Another sight in Helsinki is the Sibelius Monument. The main part of the monument is a series of over 600 stainless steel pipes of differing lengths, welded together. The bust of Sibelius, also in stainless steel, was added to the original design to appease those who did not appreciate abstract art. He appears to be frowning.



The final stop was Stockholm. Joan saw the Vasa which toppled over and sank in the harbour on her maiden voyage. From 1628 the ship lay on the bottom until she was raised in 1961. She is now restored and preserved.

### John Wright - Northern Europe on a Eurail Pass

John explained that every 3 or 4 years he and his son, Peter, take a vacation planned around a Formula 1 Grand Prix. In 2010 the race at Spa-Francorchamps was chosen.



Welcome to Norway

"The pass (\$825 each) was good for 1st Class travel in up to 5 countries for any 15 days within a 2 month period. We selected Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Sweden,

starting from Frankfurt.

"First stop, Detmold - where Armenius (Hermann) destroyed three Roman Legions using 'hit and run'

tactics. Detmold is close to the Möhne Dam. On my first visit, in 1954, the repairs to the damage inflicted by the Dam Busters were obvious, but not now. Then on to Aachen or Aix-la-Chapelle about an hour away from the race track. The Ardennes is not noted for warm dry fall weather and we spent three rather damp days at the races.

"The next day was short alphabetically but long physically - from Aachen to Aarhus. Aarhus has a Danish version of Upper Canada Village complete with an apothecary with rows of tinctures and powders. Going to Stavanger on the North Sea coast involved a ferry crossing of the Skagerrak and train journeys at either end. We left Stavanger early next morning on a coastal ferry to Bergen - a picturesque trip through the islands, calling at several fishing villages en route.

"Two nights in Bergen then to Oslo. The lady in the railway travel office suggested that we might like to take a detour with a boat trip on a fjord. This turned out to give the most spectacular views with a change of scenery every few minutes as we rounded the curves. Oslo on Sunday was quiet but a vintage car rally made for an interesting morning and a visit to the Amundsen polar expedition museum and *Kon Tiki* rounded out the day.

"Stockholm next, and a visit to Vasa (didn't see Joan), then to Copenhagen. A side trip to Roskilde to see a 'Viking' longboat which had been sailed by students to Dublin via the English Channel one summer and home via the north of Scotland the following year.



"When travelling with Peter you can be sure of three things - the days will be full and well planned, there will be a *lot* of walking and everything will pause at 5 for resuscitation."

### To sum up ...

In less than an hour we saw Europe from the Black Sea and the Mediterranean to the North Sea and the Baltic. History and geography, culture and folklore were captured in 5 talks and over 150 photographs.

Our thanks to Mike, Joyce, Allen, Joan and John for sharing their vacations with us.

## Indoor Picnic

Our thanks go to **Ada McEwan** for once again organizing our annual, catered "Indoor Picnic". The cake was a **Morley Craig** special.

Thanks, also, to **Marie-Neige Atchison** who looked after the punch, and to all the "kitchen staff".

## United Way - Jeff Turner

Did you know the difference between a Sponsor and a Donor? Did you know how the United Way decides what to fund? Did you know how many volunteers help out? Very few of us knew the answers before Jeff's talk.

There is a critical difference between Sponsors and Donors. Sponsors provide funds needed for Administration and do so knowing that there is no tax deduction for this money. This means that any money provided by Donors flows through to the final recipients.

In 2011, United way will invest in 116 programs. The funding decisions are made by a committee of volunteers - staff do not make funding decisions. Jeff made the point strongly that it is not just about handing out money but it is about engagement and relationship building. For example, one of their programs is *Hire Immigrants Ottawa*. Working with local companies - about 200, designated as The United Way Employer Council of Champions - jobs have been found for over 1000 immigrants.

There are about 14,000 volunteers involved every year.

### Technical Difficulties

Jeff's presentation was marred by an incompatibility between his slides and our system. It turned out that there was a simple solution but this was not obvious at the time.

If he will accept, we will have him back next year, and we will guarantee that the problem will not recur.

## Speakers in the News

**Bruce Montone** (September, 2008) will be leaving Ottawa Fire Service to take up an appointment in Windsor as Fire Chief. Congratulations, Bruce!

**Kathleen Petty** (January, 2008) was to have left town to take up a CBC appointment in Calgary. Her plans have had to change for health reasons. We wish her well.

## Daffynitions

**Giraffiti** - Vandalism spray painted very, very high.

**Caterpallor** - Your colour after finding half a worm in your apple.

## September 28th - New Zealand High Commissioner

H.E. Mr. Andrew Needs will be our September speaker. New Zealand has been in the news in the past year for the terrible earthquakes in Christchurch and recent snowfalls described as 'the heaviest in decades'.

We originally asked him to talk about Proportional Representation but as that was not a hot issue after our Federal Election, we have asked him to give a more general talk on "New Zealand Today".

## Management Committee - 2012

Management of the members, by the members, for the members is the Probus approach, with the implication that everyone should share the load at some time. Luckily the load is not very heavy - the Management Committee meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month (except August and December) for about an hour.

At our November Club meeting we will be looking for a Vice-president (normally considered President-elect for the following year), a Program Committee member, a Newsletter Editor and a techie to look after the presentations.

If a member of the Nominating Committee taps you on the shoulder and says, "Your Club needs YOU!", please don't head for the hills. Better yet, don't wait to be tapped, talk to Bob Atchison first.

## World Views - Fall 2011

John Kruithof has again provided us with the program of free monthly photo meetings held at Bethany Baptist Church.

Saturday Sept 24 - Carol Hart  
Exploring Bali, Laos & Cambodia

Saturday Oct 29 - Alex Bissett  
Travelling across Central America

Saturday Nov 26 - Mollie MacCormac  
Rediscovering Egypt & Jordan

Programs begin at 7.30pm. All are welcome

For more information call Sholto Cole at 613-721-3367.

## Membership Fees

Being a fairly relaxed organization, we can accommodate potential new members as guests for August and September and ask them to join in October when we open the books for 2011 memberships.