



# The Probe

Est. September 1999

Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Ottawa

June 2014, #80

## Mud, Mountains and Mindfulness

Guy Thatcher returned to tell us about his second and, as it turned out, third walks along the Camino de Santiago. The second trek, in 2011, started in Pau, France, and almost ended in disaster. Guy ran into difficulties in the rarefied air of the Pyrénées Atlantiques at 4,500 ft. He could not make his distance targets and, one day even after resting for an afternoon his heartbeat was 120 at 11pm. So after 100km of his planned 475km he had to quit and return to Canada.



*The pilgrim bridge at St-Chely d'Aubrac, Guy's 2011 end point and 2012 start. Right, an obstacle on the trail after three weeks of rain*

He expected that the diagnosis would be a cardiovascular problem but, in fact, it was diabetes. He then decided that his trekking days were over until his wife said, "You know, Guy, you have some unfinished business." In 2012 he returned to France.

The big difference between 2011 and 2012 was the weather. It rained for two weeks. On many of the paths, whether walking uphill or downhill the best place to walk was in the middle of the path, in water. The water washed the underlying stones which made it easier than the alternative - walking in mud!

Guy said that he remembers every part of the journey which was uphill but not the downhill parts. He developed a mantra, "You are here by choice. You are here by choice." With a daily climb equivalent to a 19 storey building, something was needed to drive him on.

The Way, in France is well marked. The signs have walking times to the next point. Typically, at a junction,

there would be **Γ** in white to indicate a right turn with a bar in red or a red **X** to say 'not this way'. The locals were always helpful, some offered free refreshment and just asked that you "say a word to St Jacques for us".

There is a code among the travellers that you do not ask, "Why?" You can volunteer your own reasons and some will respond but for others it is a personal and private matter. Remi carried a picture of his grandfather - "He always wanted to make the pilgrimage." Sleeping accommodation was quite Spartan - typically a bed and a blanket in a dortoir but sometimes a B&B (with sheets!)

The mid point of the journey was St-Jean-Pied-de-Port which was the starting point for Guy's first trek. From there the journey was mostly in Spain and ended in Pamplona - shades of Ernest Hemmingway.



Guy concluded with the 'Mindfulness' part:

- there are always new lessons to be learned.
- you don't have to walk fast to walk far.
- there is no such thing as too much reassurance.
- obstacles are as big as you let them be.
- life is all about relationships.
- it is about the journey, not the traveller.

And, finally, "If you have a dream, do it while you can. Now is the only real time there is, so experience it."

The questions came thick and fast. Pack? 25 lbs. Boots? One size larger for 2 pairs of socks. A days walk? About 20 km. Cost of accommodation? About \$40/night.

Guy was then kept busy selling copies of his new book, "The Journey Continues - Mud, Mountains and Mindfulness".

## The Great White Bears of the North



Craig Greenwood's career was with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources which involved him in expeditions to southern Hudson's Bay. His talk was a comparison of conditions and techniques in 1980's and his later visit in 2007. The objectives were the same - to find out more about Ontario's polar bear population.

Thirty-five years ago, Ontario knew little about its polar bear population - where do they live?; how many?; where do they travel?

The researches in the '80s answered the basic questions and the follow up in 2007 added to that knowledge.

Craig's slide collection included videos of sedating bears, close-ups of the team working on bears - checking teeth, stitching wounds and generally giving them the equivalent of an annual medical; and views of the countryside. Twenty years have seen development of more effective drugs, both for sedation and recovery, and for aiding the bear's general health. Darts have to be shot accurately into the shoulder region to get the penetration needed and bears have to be herded carefully as they can overheat if they feel forced to run too far. An ear tag with a country ID and a serial number means that a bear found anywhere can be reported to the original taggers. One warning - approach a sedated bear from the end that does not bite - just in case.

Slides of the living conditions for the team showed the improvement from tents to huts. Air service became safer with twin-engined aircraft rather than single-engined aircraft. Food preparation improved.

Also included in the presentation were striking shots of the landscape, both from the air and the ground level view of the difficult terrain. But the biggest "Aahs" were reserved for the photographs of the bears, particularly with their cubs.

### Melting Ice

- less food
- lower weight
- females don't reach mass for gestation
- eggs are absorbed
- lower birth rate

Although the population level is holding, this may not last!



### The Bear Facts

Derived from the Brown Bear maybe millions of years ago. Differences: polar bears do not hibernate; brown bears are vegetarian, polar bears are omnivorous - seals, walrus, belugas, carrion, vegetation.

There are 19 sub-populations in the world, Norway, USA, Russia and Canada. Canada has 13.

World population: 20 - 25,000; Canada: ~ 15,000; Ontario: ~ 1,000

Size: newborns 30 - 35 cm, 0.5 kg; males 2.4 - 3 m, 250 - 771 kg.

Speed: 6 mph. Distance: 60 miles/day

Gestation: 4 months but the eggs are held until the mother's weight is right and then implant. Birth may be 8 months after mating.

Morbidity: 60% in year 1. Life: 15 - 18 years, some 30.

Fur: Two layers. Outer layer is hollow, transparent, pigment-free tubes. Fat: About 4.5 inches for insulation.

US: "Threatened species". Canada: "Species of concern"

## July 23rd “In-house”

We have 4 speakers lined up for July which means that there is time for one more - how about YOU?

Diversity is the theme this year. Judy Foreman will tell us about the Collingwood Elvis Festival. This year's festival starts on July 23rd and runs through Sunday, the 27th. If Judy's talk inspires you to put on your Blue Suede Shoes, there will still be time to run down to Collingwood and get into the action.

Morley Craig, whose previous talk on bees and bee-keeping left us wanting more, returns to tell us about the problems facing the honey-bee population and the knock-on effect that the reduced numbers may have on food production.

Allen Taylor will talk about Alfred Nobel, who invented dynamite and owned a steel company called Bofors, which produced the Bofors gun, a light anti-aircraft weapon widely used in WW II. Having done his bit for death and destruction, Nobel is now known for his Peace Prize - the foremost of several prizes funded by his foundation.

Lenore Porter's talk is “New Tricks”. We have no idea what that is going to be about or if an “Old Dog” is involved or who or what that might be.

## Picnic Time

After our July speakers it will be picnic time. Following our usual pattern, the event will be catered so no worries about what to bring.

Everything is in the capable hands of Marie-Neige. Just be prepared to sit back, relax and enjoy.

## Lunch - June 25th (today!)

Join us for lunch at *Ten Sushi* - a new Japanese restaurant on Bank Street, next to (north of) *Farm Boy* and opposite the big Bell building.

There are two main options: order from the electronic menu - a tablet about 3 times the size of a smart-phone; or take a fixed lunch.

The ‘all-you-can-eat’ option is \$14 and you can keep on going back to the menu for as long as you can keep eating. The fixed lunch is from a printed menu and a little less daunting for a first time visitor. The price is \$10 and includes a choice of soups followed by a laquer compartmentalized box with your choice of main item, appetizer (small spring rolls or dumplings), salad and rice.

Either way - the food is fresh and tasty.

## Tours

The Western Ottawa Probus Club is organizing a series of bus tours. The two this fall are:

- 15 October - Colours and Haunts - an afternoon ride to enjoy the fall colours of the Ottawa Valley returning to Ottawa for a light meal and a “Haunted Walk”.

- 14 to 16 November - St Jacob's Sparkle Tour - a visit to the quaint village of St. Jacobs for their annual village-wide Holiday Open House “Sparkle”. Options include a Patsy Cline concert *A Closer walk with Patsy Cline*.

More details at [www.probuswesternottawa.ca/social/index.htm](http://www.probuswesternottawa.ca/social/index.htm)

The Western Ottawa Club would be delighted if any of our members joined their outings.

## Spring Fling 2014



Spring Fling 2014 was flung at the Orchard View Conference Centre, hosted by the Probus Club of Leeds Grenville. More details later...

## Spring Fling 2015 ...

... will be in Kemptville, hosted by the Probus Club of North Grenville.

## Tea Up!

No, that's nothing to do with golf. We need help in the kitchen.

If you enjoy your coffee at our meetings, please consider helping out by being our coffee and tea maker for a few mornings. We have been lucky in the past that one or other of our members has taken on the task for long periods, but the well seems to have dried up.

Would you consider taking it on for a couple of months - *please*. I want my coffee.

## Poetry Corner

This week saw the start of Summer - and about time too. We can celebrate the event with a poem by C.J. Denis, an Australian poet known for his humorous poems, especially "The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke", published in the early 20th century

### When Summer Comes

When Summer comes  
To silence the retreating drums  
Of stubborn Winter, when content  
Shall salve my chill predicament.  
And I shall loll beneath the sun  
And dream of duties to be done;  
While Phyllis my tall beaker fills  
And Strephon dances on the hills  
And pipes a lay, I'll take my ease  
And listen to the labouring bees.  
And mock their dull industrious hums  
When Summer comes.

When Summer's here  
And labourers look upon their beer  
Most lovingly, while winking foam  
Lisps, 'Send me home! Ah, send me home!'  
And they, intoning briefly, 'Sluck!'  
Its gladness 'neath their pinnies tuck,  
I, too, mayhap, shall send a pot,  
Spurlos versunken, to that spot  
Its magic warms; lest that stern man  
Who rules my dietetic plan  
Bubbles, 'Verboten!' as I fear  
When Summer's here.

When Summer shines,  
Then to blue seas my choice inclines  
Where nymphs upon the golden sands  
Hold out Nirvana in glad hands,  
Or run to greet the languorous sea  
And, with mer-maiden modesty,  
Frisk in foam. Then would I seize  
Despite my ageing arteries  
Joy by the beard! Unless, alack,  
A flock of olden ills come back,  
As come they will, by all the signs,  
When Summer shines.

When Summer comes  
Oh, let me loll 'neath sunlit gums  
Yet, I don't know. A man must eat,  
Come winter hail or summer heat;  
And, that he eat, a man must toil.  
Aye, tho' arterial systems boil.  
Wherefore, 'twill likely be my lot,  
As hitherto when days wax hot,  
To yearn again in longing lays  
For brisk, crisp, Winter's bracing days  
To earn a few poor meagre crumbs  
When Summer comes.

### **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.**