



**June 2026**

## **President's Note**

G'day

June is the first month of winter in the Southern Hemisphere and although some say the Snowy Mountains which are in the southern part of NSW has more snow than Switzerland, the State of Queensland where I live, very seldom sees any snow, and if it does fall, only lasts a day or two. A region called the Granite Belt does get quite cold though and there is a saying about Stanthorpe where it gets so cold, '*It will freeze the balls off a brass monkey*', which is a nautical term that Geoffrey may want to expand.

In Australia and New Zealand, earlier this year in March, all Probus Clubs were required to hold their Annual General Meeting, submit financial accounts for the financial year ending 31st December for approval, and then have an election of Management Committee members for the 2026-2027. Many clubs now have new Presidents, Secretaries or Treasurers. Sadly some clubs also close when unable to get members to take on executive positions of President and Secretary. Generally because the clubs have been going for 40 years or more, or the average age of members is in the high 80's and they haven't been working hard enough to attract younger members.

Good succession planning and an action plan to attract younger members is essential for a Probus club survival and growth.

As part of this, the Probus Association of Qld (PAQ) also held their AGM – and for my sins, I was elected President after the resignation through ill health of former President Carwyn Arnold. Fortunately, my wife Margaret had been serving as Treasurer of PAQ for the past year, as we share the same home office and have helped me settle into this role quite well. PAQ was formed in 1992 to form a network of around 140 clubs in Qld to share information, arrange social activities and group tours and sometimes assist in the management of clubs, but not get involved in policy making etc, which is the domain of our governing body PSPL in Sydney, NSW.

So I now wear three hats: Secretary of our Springwood Probus Club; PAQ President; Probus Global President. Each with different challenges and responsibilities, but also equally rewarding in the new friendships that develop mixed with some fellowship and fun.

In conclusion, I recently saw a Facebook post and photos from a fellow Rotarian in my own Rotary Club, that he and his wife were staying near Snowdon, the highest mountain in England and Wales. This immediately triggered a memory of a campfire song I used to join in singing while living in Newcastle NSW, and bush walking and camping with friends – about ‘Woad’ of which one of the lines is ‘Tramp up Snowdon with our Woad on...’ and I will leave it at that for our Welsh Newsletter Editor Geoffrey to expand more about Woad.

Merv Richens

### ***Editor's Note***

Welcome to the June edition of the Probus Global Newsletter, the snowdrops, daffodils and tulips have flowered and given way to bluebells, hosta' and a myriad of seedlings growing happily in the greenhouse awaiting the ending of cold weather and planting out. Here in the UK, as we approach the longest day on June 21<sup>st</sup>, and looking forward to warmer days and shorter nights, the Southern Hemisphere is preparing for autumn and winter. I'm sure that there were lots of barbecues '*down under*' being enjoyed by Probus members and their families, something that 'up north' we are looking forward to.

So what are the biggest things that will happen in 2026? Let's start with the big one – the biggest ever men's football World Cup takes place in North America when 48 nations will compete in Canada, Mexico and the United States and there's home interest in the tournament as it is 60 years since England won the tournament on that memorable day in 1966 when they beat Germany 4 - 2.

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell made the first telephone call and 2026 marks the centenary of the iconic British red telephone box, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, which emerged from a competition for a new, visible kiosk, with the first cast-iron 'K2' model appearing on London streets in 1926. The most common, smaller 'Jubilee' model was introduced in 1935 to celebrate King George V's Silver Jubilee, leading to 60,000 installations by 1968. A total of eight various iterations evolved over the years from its first introduction when the telephone system was a part of the UK government's General Post Office (GPO). When in 1969, it was nationalised and became just 'The Post Office' and in 1981 was split into two separate businesses; Post Office and British Telecommunications (BT). The telecom business was sold off and privatised in 1984. In 2013 Royal Mail was privatised.

Thus began a steady decline in the usage of the famous red telephone box, which along with other British icons, red London buses, black cabs, fortunately both still exist today and so do the red telephone boxes, but many are now used as heritage icons. The 'adopt a box' scheme saw many being redeployed right across the country in towns and villages now being used as receptacles for defibrillators or book depositories as many were considered as listed buildings. Many were bought privately and used in houses and gardens serving as showers or merely artefacts. The street telephone boxes in the London area contained the complete listings of every telephone subscriber in the Greater London area in five enormous volumes fixed within the box itself.

Before the introduction of the mobile telephone network, London itself had approximately 5 million fixed landline numbers served by 350 local exchanges identified by the first three letters and associated number sequences of the district in which they were situated, for example, WIMbledon [916], PADddington [723], HYDe Park, [493] etc., and evocative names such as GRlmsdyke [474], BELGravia [235] or MAYfair [629].

Now all the London codes have been replaced by digital numbers; beginning 020. The 020 code serves as the largest linked numbering scheme in the UK, with a capacity for nearly 100 million numbers across 170 telephone exchanges and even in the age of the mobile phone, 30,000 new numbers are allocated each week according to Ofcom, the UK's regulator for the communications services.



## News from Canada

Imagine my excitement when I recently saw a banner headline saying that Newcastle's historic railway station was to get a facelift and to be transformed into a premier tourism, retail, and hospitality precinct, a vibrant, must-visit harbour-side destination. A mix of artisanal bakeries, specialty fine-food retailers, and a gastropub showcasing regional beers and local produce. The precinct will also feature a wine bar and cellar door, as well as a new multi-purpose function room situated on the top floor, aimed 'to breathe new life into the city's foreshore by blending the station's rich history with modern luxury and community spaces.'

I was already packing my suitcase to travel north when I realised this was not Barrie Morgan of Probus Guildwood' old stomping ground of Newcastle on Tyne, UK but Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, what a disappointment!

I recently attended a Zoom meeting where a number of Probus representatives were present, including my good friend Barrie Morgan sporting his Newcastle United football shirt. He said as far as he was aware, there were two 'Newcastle's' in the UK, Newcastle Upon Tyne, his birthplace and another further south called 'Newcastle Under Lyme', in Staffordshire.

So I did some research and found there were more than 100 different 'Newcastle's' or 'New Castles' around the globe, in many different countries and in many different languages. NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD links them in friendship, and to share information/best practice/ideas through practical projects in the fields of tourism, culture, business and education and youth engagement.

[Newcastles of the World:https://newcastlesoftheworld.com](https://newcastlesoftheworld.com)

## News from New Zealand

### What makes New Zealand a terrible place to stay or live in?

**Editor's note:** This was an article that came my way through the on-line posting 'Quora' with apologies for our Probus members who live there!

I moved over 10 months ago from the UK together with my young family to Canterbury on the South Island. My wife is a kiwi who has been away in the UK for 12 years. My boys are 3 and 5 and we felt it was time to make the move if we were ever going to do it. The first 6 months were very difficult, turning up somewhere with no history (my own history, not NZ history!) is hard. Plus being in our late 30s making new friends and breaking into established friendship groups has been hard. I have however found kiwis to be very friendly and helpful. I think the ones who have lived overseas and had an OE (overseas experience) understand what it's like to emigrate and have been particularly nice to us.

The cost of living is high here and it baffles me that things like milk (one of NZ's major exports) and NZ lamb costs so much. Also I have found that NZ companies seem to have a monopoly on consumers. This means a lack of choice of things such as clothes and appliances. However car insurance and house prices I think are significantly lower than in the UK. We sold a terrace house in Manchester and for the same price bought a brand new 4 bedroom house here. I think the arrival of large retailers like Amazon (soon apparently going to offer free shipping from Australia) will make the market more competitive, however, if I go back to the UK, not a chance.

Here my boys have the opportunity to be outdoors a lot more. They are able to be in the mountains or at the beach within an hour or two. The schools seem to be more relaxed and focused on student wellbeing. Generally students are responsible for their own learning. In the UK I worked in education and children were not allowed to fail if they did, it was a teacher's responsibility and seemed to be their fault. Everyone's opinions and views in life are shaped by experiences. Compared to where I lived in the UK I feel life here is significantly better. However if I lived in another part of the UK perhaps I would find things here frustrating.

But at my current stage of my life I am very happy here.[1]

### ANZAC DAY

This article was submitted by Liz Smith NZ Coordinator Probus Global, which commemorates the anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli in 1915.

On 25th April Anzac Day is recognised in New Zealand and Australia. It is the Anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli Peninsular in 1915. The word Anzac comes from Australian and NZ Army Corps and was born early in the Great War. Who first created the acronym is not known, but it served as a form of shorthand to designate the two armies, or a soldier from one of the two countries. It is probably most remembered as the action that took place at a small cove, now called Anzac Cove. It was here that the first Australian and New Zealand troops landed. The term Anzac has continued to be used through subsequent wars.

Anzac Day is steeped in tradition. There are pre-dawn parades attended by returned servicemen and women at local War memorials around the country. They are joined by members of the community, many wearing their forebear's medals. Although, with time, the numbers are shrinking, pride of place at this ceremony is for the veterans. The ceremony is brief and the haunting words from Laurence Binyon's poem, 'The Fallen', are recited:

'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.'

The Last Post is played, followed by a minute's silence, a short address and the service finishes with a prayer and the National anthem.

Later in the morning there is a second ceremony at a War Memorial or Cenotaph, attended by servicemen and women, diplomats, and the public. Here wreaths are laid by dignitaries and those representing a number of organisations. In the days leading up to Anzac Day in New Zealand people often wear a red poppy to remember those who died. The poppy has been synonymous not only with Anzac Day, but also at military funerals and is seen on war graves in New Zealand and around the world. Many will be familiar with Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's wonderfully moving poem – In Flanders Fields – written in 1915 after burying a close friend. He was inspired by red poppies fluttering gently in the breeze in a cemetery, and to him they symbolized growth and rebirth in a landscape, soaked in blood and destruction.

Anzac Day has been observed in New Zealand since 1916 with the exception of 2020 when it was cancelled due to Covid, as public gatherings were forbidden. One of the most moving Anzac Day Ceremonies takes place at dawn at Anzac Cove in Turkey. Each year, thousands make the journey to the Gallipoli Peninsula, gathering in the pre-dawn hours to honour those who served. Many Kiwis are there remembering their grandfathers, or other relatives who died there; others to show respect to the fallen.

**Editor's Note:** I was so pleased to receive this article as I had the privilege of attending the commemorations myself in 2018 at Anzac Cove. I was travelling on the Cunard ship 'Queen Elizabeth' on its world cruise when many hundreds of Australian and New Zealand passengers joined the ship in Sydney, then we all sailed north to Turkey. Just before dawn on 25th April, the ship's company, passengers, friends and relatives gathered at the stern to watch the sun rise over Anzac Cove to the sound of a lone bugler playing the Last Post, it was a very moving and tearful ceremony as there were many present wearing medals from their lost relatives who fell at Gallipoli. Thank you for this article Liz; *Requiescat in pace*.

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[1] <https://www.Quora.com>

## News from the UK

The Probus Club movement was formed in the United Kingdom in 1965. The movement had its beginnings in two clubs, both created by members of Rotary. It is widely acknowledged that Probus had its foundation in Welwyn Garden City 50 years ago but the first lunch meeting of a club specifically named 'Probus' was held by the Caterham club on March 2, 1966. Caterham, Surrey is well-known for the home of the famous car manufacturer that produces lightweight high performance vehicles.

The Probus Club of Caterham is now well into its second half-century and a jubilant 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated with a very special lunch at Bletchingley Golf Club in March. The Club was founded in 1966 by Harold Blanchard, a Caterham businessman, on the tenets of simplicity and freedom from constraints and obligations, and has successfully adhered to these up to the present day. Currently the Club has 60 members and associates from a wide range of different backgrounds, interests and former occupations.

Caterham Lady Chairman, Viv Richards was able to welcome the Chairman of Tandridge District Council, Cllr Mike Crane and his consort Nina, and 80 invited guests. MC Bill Broadhead ably assisted, and a splendid cake, baked by Ann Thomas, was cut ceremonially and enjoyed by all the guests accompanied by coffee. Dick Woods played a fascinating audio tape recording of the founder's wife describing the foundation of the club followed by a quiz. Jenny Bond, who was involved in preparing the original constitution of the Club in 1966 was presented with a painting by Viv Richards as a way of commemoration.



### **Croeso y Cymru (welcome to Wales)**

WestJet will launch direct, seasonal flights between Toronto (YYZ) and Cardiff (CWL) starting May 22, 2026, four times a week marking the first direct connection to Wales from Canada for 40 years. This service was first launched from Toronto to Cardiff in 1985 by Wardair but this ceased in 1989, when Wardair was taken over by Canadian Airlines. In 1946, Maxwell W. Ward founded the Polaris Charter Company in Yellowknife NWT. In 1952 the airline was formed as Wardair and operations began on 6 June 1953 using a single engine de Havilland Canada Otter. In 1962, it entered the trans-atlantic charter market and changed its name to Wardair Canada Ltd. On January 1, 1976, the name was changed again to Wardair Canada (1975) Ltd and yet again on June 10, 1977, to Wardair International Ltd. Wardair was not a discount airline but an airline providing good service at lower-than-average prices. They were known for high quality meals and friendly staff. 'Steak & Champagne' flights was a popular advertising tag line in the 1980s, and won various awards from magazines for their service. Flight attendants served food on Wardair-branded Royal Doulton china on tray-table tablecloths on the passenger tray. The seats featured generous pitch.

### **News from Wales**



Outgoing Chairman, Ron Bellingham hands the Chain of Office to new Chair Bob Atkins at the Annual General Meeting of Llandrindod Wells Probus Club held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April at the Metropole Hotel. Bob, a native of Hertfordshire, trained as an aircraft fitter and worked for de Havilland, Hawker Siddeley and finally British Aerospace at their factory in Hatfield. Retiring from the aerospace industry, he joined Hertfordshire Constabulary where he remained for eleven years; he moved to Llandrindod Wells in 2002.



### Queensland Governor celebrates Probus 50 years in Australia with Special Function

Friendship, fellowship and community spirit were warmly celebrated at Government House this week, as the Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr. Jeannette Young AC PSM and Professor Nimmo hosted a special reception marking 50 years of Probus in Australia. Representatives from across Queensland gathered to recognise the remarkable contribution Probus has made to the wellbeing and quality of life of retirees over the past half-century. With more than 150 clubs and over 11,000 members across the state and with more than 1,400 clubs nationwide, the movement continues to play an important role in helping people remain active, connected and engaged in their communities after retirement.



In making her formal remarks, the Governor reflected on the strength and reach of the organisation across Queensland and congratulated the 50th anniversary organisers, particularly Chairman Judith Mastraecchi and Queensland committee member Caroline Nelson, on their work coordinating celebrations throughout the year. These include a nationwide picnic and a range of local activities that will see the familiar blue and gold of Probus visible in communities across Australia.

As Australia's population ages and many people experience retirement with fewer traditional social networks, the Governor emphasised that the sense of connection fostered by Probus was more important than ever. By encouraging friendship, lifelong learning and active participation in community life; Probus continues to support older Australians to remain engaged and valued contributors to society.

The Probus Association of Queensland (PAQ) was represented by President Merv Richens, Secretary Mary Helbig and Treasurer Margaret Richens.

**Editor's note:** These next interesting articles from John Thorne in Tasmania probably sums-up what a lot of Probians feel!

### **'I was mistaken'!**

To understand my comments you will need to know that in life I have been 'project driven'. Ask me to do something and that's my thrust, times, costs, numbers, appropriate clothing, permissions and more, much more. Quite a few years ago my wife, when she was 'activities manager' at our local Probus club, announced and described our upcoming visit to a heritage home with a spectacular garden. She asked questions and fellow member Ken asked the first question, 'Where will we have lunch?' At the time Shirley was disappointed and when we were at home, we chuckled about Ken and lunch.

Of course I was wrong. Mainly wrong, anyway. To members of Probus visiting places IS important and a key activity; food is important and of interest for various venues, but the real key is to be able to chat with friends, to gossip and to share stories. That's where I was wrong.

It is now more clear to me that staying socially active is crucial for our members and their well being. Research clearly shows that social interaction can improve mood and thinking functions while also reducing risks around dementia, loneliness and depression. The excursions themselves can add a little to physical health and lower blood pressure.

Yesterday I attended a 'men's luncheon' when just 12 of our 80 members attended. (About two dozen female members were elsewhere!) We gossiped! We examined the problems the world is currently having and we suggested solutions – amazed that the global leaders haven't been in touch with us, by the way. It may be that some men in the group are in the early stages of dementia – I don't know. What I do know is that we all enjoyed each other's company, remembered things from ages ago, had a good meal and promised each other we would do it again – soon.

The lesson I have learned is to relax a bit more. Putting good people together is a positive thing and Probus does that better than most.

### **Probus Growth - thinking aloud**

Isn't it wonderful that we have hundreds and hundreds of Probus Clubs around the world all very similar but different? In Australia there have been many exercises discussing the falling total numbers of Probians yet there are clubs that are holding the numbers consistently. I would like to chat about just one aspect that is rarely mentioned; The Venue.

In my view, where we meet does matter. Consider a prospective member entering two different venues - a church hall or an attractive bowls, RSL or yacht club. Then there's the matter of furniture. I have been invited to many diverse Probus clubs and I'm especially dismayed when I see members having to put out chairs and maybe tables beforehand and then pack away those items afterwards. Then there's the room itself - is it drab or colourful? In addition I'm well aware that at some venues the morning tea is provided by an external group while in others, the Probus members do it themselves. No model is right - however I think of that prospective member looking around and asking themselves - do I want to be part of this?

One of the pioneers of Probus urged us all to 'keep it going'. He also said 'keep it cheap'. I feel we need to be reasonable when we think about costs - but do we need to be cheap? Our membership is made of (broadly) people who are associated with professions and business. I would think that a meeting room that is comfortable, with good acoustics, appropriate audio visuals and comfortable catering is the goal. Isn't it wonderful too when there's easy, adequate parking? In a way meeting in an attractive venue shows more respect to the Probus organisation from the casual observers' point of view as well as full respect for members.

There's more! People who research these matters have found there's more to the venue than just being attractive. There is a strategic asset in having an attractive venue - it does engage those members in a more positive way and indeed increase 'thinking' and friendly interactions between members. A well-appointed meeting room gives a message to all members that says 'we value you' and to prospective members 'we welcome you'.

There is some inverse logic here too. If a Probus club is struggling for members, an active group in the club might think more carefully about upgrading the venue where they meet, even at a small increased cost as a strategy to keep members and attract new ones. More attractive meeting spaces do encourage participation and satisfaction with each meeting. It does encourage current members to come along more frequently and RETENTION of members is of equal importance in keeping our numbers in Probus.

Dr John G. Thorne. AM [JP] FACEA; Tasmania Lifelong Volunteer Award.

### **From Probus South Pacific**

In times past, seeing was believing. Today, however, that assumption no longer holds true thanks to 'Artificial Intelligence' [AI] where fake videos, images and even voice recordings, known as 'deepfakes', can be created with alarming ease. Whilst this may be an acceptable way forward for the film and entertainment agencies, it's being increasingly exploited by those who would wish to relieve us of our hard-earned money and it's becoming increasingly common.

Fabricated telephone calls from alleged family members in trouble and wanting money now proliferate our world, voice messages harvested by 'scammers' by nefarious means can fool even the best of us. Regrettably, older family members, parents and such, always protective of their loved ones, are falling prey to these scams when a son or daughter on vacation in foreign parts suddenly calls to say they have been involved in a serious road accident and are in urgent need of funds to pay hospital bills. The emotional pressure, combined with the realism of the voice, can override even the most cautious instincts and the cry for help created by digital means seems real enough. So we must stay vigilant. Increasingly social media platforms are now commonplace and used by the younger generation and provide rich pickings by way of video clips and voice messages from a generation where public exposure is considered normal and these are being harvested and used to good effect.

Ask yourself the question, can I believe this? Yes, my son or daughter is on vacation in Thailand, are they in trouble and how can I assist? Using such simple checks as a codeword agreed before someone leaves the country could be one way of blocking a scammer from soliciting your money. Pause before acting, verify independently, audio and speech irregularities, these can all be checks. If it's a video call, look for voice and image out of sync, blurring of face, background shadows, stilted movements, etc.

## Editor's Note

The most effective defence to deepfakes, scammers, etc., is to apply the age-old ABC philosophy 'assume nothing, believe no-one, check everything', it's a mantra often used by law enforcement agencies in criminal investigations. Cybersecurity, and due diligence is applied to ensure accuracy and mitigate risk. Known as the ABC principle of investigation, it requires practitioners to verify all evidence independently, challenge assumptions, and not rely on hearsay or initial assumptions. It could save you your life savings, I rest my case!

## News from the USA

**Editor's Note.** Larry Wright sent in this article from what appears to be the first active Probus Club in the USA in Palm Coast, Florida, hopefully more Clubs will follow?

My wife, Eva and I, are originally Canadian where Probus is very active but we were never involved. Now, dual citizens and a 40+ year Rotary member, retired in Florida, were looking for some social activity. With the help of Canadian friends, Bob & Maureen Baker, who are members of the Probus Club of Mountainview, Collingwood, Ontario and Richard Furlong, President, Probus Global, about starting a new Club, we had our first meeting in March 2023. In attendance were Richard Furlong, on zoom, our local Mayor, current Rotary District Governor and about 12 interested folks. We are now 32 members and the only active club in the U.S. We meet the third Wednesday of each month, 11:00-noon, at the Cypress Knoll Golf & Country Club with a guest speaker followed by an optional lunch which each member preorders from a limited menu, which changes monthly, and is ready promptly at the end of our meeting. We also have group tours of various points of local interest. We have a few other Rotarian members plus some 'snowbirds' who are folks who spend winters in Florida and go back north in the Spring. We have 'twinned' with the Probus Club of Waikanae, New Zealand and have frequent contact with them. We were sponsored by my Rotary Club, but have so far been unable to arouse any interest or cooperation from a Rotary District Governor with spreading the word about Probus. The picture shows some of the local K-9 Police Officers who gave an interesting presentation about their work.



Whilst we are in the USA and following the Royal visit of their Majesty's the King and Queen, the USA is now gearing up for its 250th birthday on July 4th. In 1776 the USA celebrated the Declaration of Independence, yet these anniversary birthday parties have been fraught with spectacular incidents. The first big anniversary came 50 years later in 1826. This was the last occasion on which signatories to the Declaration of Independence were still alive. Only just, in the case of the second and third presidents: both John Adams and the man who had actually written the text, Thomas Jefferson, managed to die on the anniversary itself, 4th July of that year.

## News from Canada

### From William Thomas, Niagara Dailies column - April 23, 2026. Squirrels – rats with really nice tails

They're ruining my deck, they're a pain in the neck. They dig holes in my lawn, they're up before dawn. They ripped up my garden, they ate through my shed. They serve no purpose, I wish they were dead. Squirrels – nature's own juvenile delinquents. I've had it up to here with squirrels and when I say 'here' I mean the firewood pile they knocked down and the soffits they're chewing off to get into the attic and the privacy fence they use as a runway.

Why did the squirrel cross the road? To be the first of his species to ever do so without changing his mind halfway across, then retreating, darting back, getting almost across, then pivot! Pivot! Driving instructors tell students that the surest way to hit a squirrel is to try and avoid it. Many years ago, I had two squirrels on my property. Then I got a dog. A big dog! 'Ha, ha', I said to myself. 'I'll fix them little varmints!' 'Jake'll run those little blighters clear across the border at Fort Erie.' The following spring I had eight squirrels on the property with grown-up children who visited on weekends.

Intentionally, they would run along the hydro lines in opposite directions until Jake was hoarse from barking and dizzy from running in circles. Sometimes he'd chase two of them and when they split, he'd crash headfirst into the tree. Jake blew out his cruciate ligament chasing a squirrel and the cost of that operation means you'll be reading this column until I'm 97 years of age and checking my own byline in order to remember my name. I believe God put squirrels on this earth just to torment dogs. They're sadistic little Sciuridae meaning... family of rodents characterized by short muzzles, bloated cheeks and the inability to make quick decisions. A squirrel is really a rat with a very nice tail.

I was watching NBC news one evening and they showed a clip of Twiggy The Water-Skiing Squirrel sashaying around a pool behind a remote-controlled toy boat to the delight of hundreds of people with severely limited entertainment needs. Twiggy soon became the star of boat shows and summer festivals all over North America and Europe. When asked the secret of training a squirrel to water-ski, owner Lou Ann Best replied: 'You have to give them a lot of love and affection and tell them the same thing over and over again.' Which is basically how the White House staff handles President Trump.

I couldn't actually kill an animal but after decades of living with these nutters, I'd give Twiggy a pinch on the bum that would take her off the tour for weeks. Now deceased, Ivan Dagely was a famous squirrel stuffer from Nova Scotia. A fancy taxidermist, Ivan stuffed dead squirrels and dressed them up as people. This little patient in bed, that little doctor in his whites, the tiny nurse with a clipboard – the Dead Squirrel Hospital Scene was Ivan's finest work. Every time I spot a squirrel destroying my property, I want to send a note off to the squirrel stuffers of the world – please feel free to recruit my squirrels for your talent pool. I'll pay shipping. Hate squirrels, love chipmunks so yeah, I'm a rodent racist!

### **The Latest from the Stock Market:** ... and in today's market news...

...Helium was up, feathers were down and paper was stationary. Fluorescent tubing was dimmed in light trading. Knives were up sharply. Pencils lost a few points. Hiking equipment was trailing. Elevators rose, while escalators continued their slow decline. Weights were up in heavy trading. Biscuits were crumbling and mining equipment hit rock bottom. Diapers remained unchanged. The market for raisins dried up. Balloon prices were inflated and toilet paper touched a new bottom.

## Some more anniversaries



The Settle and Carlisle Railway in Yorkshire, England is celebrating the 150th anniversary of passenger services on May 1, 2026. The 73-mile long railway, famously saved from closure in 1980, has many viaducts such as Ribbleshead and steam trains are regular visitors hauling charter trains.

One hundred years ago, John Logie Baird, a Scottish inventor, electrical engineer and innovator demonstrated the world's first mechanical television system. The biggest and most controversial event in 1956 that brought the world to the brink of nuclear armageddon, was the 'Suez Crisis' that engulfed Britain, the effects of which are still remembered today. The world's first supersonic airliner, Concorde, made its first commercial flight in 1976, the same year that Apple launched their Apple 1 computer. Not to forget that 40 years ago, the world's first major nuclear accident occurred at Chernobyl and on 8th May, Sir David Attenborough, the well-known TV broadcaster and author, was 100 years old.

## Notable sayings

When people exclaim 'Eureka' they are harking back to a legendary event in the life of the Greek mathematician and inventor Archimedes. While wrestling with the problem of how to determine the purity of gold, he had the sudden realisation that the buoyancy of an object placed in water was equal in magnitude to the weight of the water the object displaces. According to one popular version of the legend, he made his discovery at a public bathhouse, whereupon he leapt out of his bath, exclaiming in Greek '*Heurēka! Heurēka!*' ('I have found it!') then ran home naked through the streets. The absence of a contemporary source for this anecdote has done nothing to diminish its popularity over the centuries. The English word *eureka*, which of course hails from *heurēka*, has also retained its popularity; its use as an interjection dates to the early 17th century, and it gained a brand-new use in the early 20th century as an adjective describing moments of discovery or epiphany.

## Food for thought

The richest man in China once said: 'If you put bananas and money in front of monkeys, the monkeys will choose bananas because they don't know that money can buy a lot of bananas. In fact, if you offer people work and business, they will choose work because most people don't know that a business can make more money than a salary. The reason why the poor are poor is because they spend a lot of time in school, and they work for a salary instead of working for themselves, because a salary just gives you an income to live on, but profit can make you a fortune.'

## More food for thought

Despite the constant doom and gloom in the news, there remain good reasons to be hopeful about the planet's future. One is that this isn't the first time humanity has felt helpless in the face of a growing crisis. In the 1890s, urban-planning experts were struggling to contend with what has been dubbed the 'Great Horse Manure Crisis' of 1894. In an age when horse-drawn transport was the norm, city streets were in danger of disappearing under several feet of equine dung. Indeed, The Times newspaper predicted that within 50 years, London would be buried by nine feet of the stuff. So how was it all unexpectedly resolved?

To say that road transport relied on horses in the late Victorian era would be a serious understatement. If you've watched TV dramas set in this period, you've probably seen more than one example of the *'hansom cab'*. This type of carriage was designed earlier in the century by the York-born architect Joseph Hansom. An individual hansom cab could be pulled by a single horse. In 1900, London's streets were packed with over 11,000 hansom cabs. London also had several thousand buses, each of which would be pulled by 12 horses per day.

All in all, then, there would have been more than 50,000 horses clip-clopping across the British capital on a daily basis. The same sounds would have been ringing around the streets of New York City. The US city was estimated to have 170,000 horses by 1900. The problem of excessive horse-manure collecting in the streets was solved by the proliferation of cars, buses and electrified trams which replaced horses as the means of transportation in big cities.

**and from the President's message a further reference to 'Brass Monkey's!** - The phrase *'freeze the balls off a brass monkey'* is a colloquialism used to describe extremely cold weather. While there is a popular historical explanation involving naval warfare, linguists and historians generally consider the story to be a myth.

### **The Common Myth (The 'Naval' Origin)**

The most widespread explanation is that the phrase originates from 18th and 19th-century warships. The claim is that cannonballs were stored in pyramids on the deck, held in place by a brass frame or tray called a 'monkey'. Proponents claim that during extreme cold, the brass tray would contract faster and more significantly than the iron cannonballs, causing the balls to roll off the tray. However, historical records and physics disprove this as there is no record of a cannonball rack being called a 'monkey' in any official naval manual; they were actually called 'shot garlands' and were typically made of wood. In fact, storing heavy cannonballs in loose pyramids on a moving ship's deck would be dangerous; they were actually stored in lockers below deck. The difference in thermal expansion between brass and iron is not great enough to 'pop' balls out of a tray under real-world weather conditions.

**The Probable Real Origin:** was that the phrase likely evolved from 19th-century humour and figurative speech. During the 19th century, small brass figurines of monkeys (such as the 'Three Wise Monkeys') were common souvenirs from East Asia. It is likely that the expression simply referred to these inanimate objects becoming extremely cold to the touch. Early variations from the mid-1800s described things being cold or hot enough to affect other parts of a 'brass monkey' such as freezing its nose, tail, or whiskers, or melting its nose. The *'balls'* variation is considered a 20<sup>th</sup> - century development, likely as a vulgar or humorous escalation of the original saying.



**Editor's note:** With further reference to the President's message, I am including the reference to 'Woad' that he mentioned. Mt. Snowdon is in Wales and is the tallest mountain south of the Scottish border.

Woad is a natural antibiotic and antiviral to avoid infection. Pictish warriors would cover themselves in Woad paint and their battle scars would turn blue. They would also practice scarification and pack Woad on the wounds leaving permanent blue designs on their bodies.

What's the use of wearing braces,  
Vest and pants and boots with laces,  
Spats or hats you buy in places, down in Brompton Road  
What's the use of shirts of cotton, studs that always get forgotten?

These affairs are simply rotten, better far is Woad.  
Woad's the stuff to show them, Woad to scare your foe men  
Boil it to a brilliant hue then rub it on your back or abdomen  
Ancient Britons never hit on anything as good as Woad, to fit on  
Neck or Knees, or where you sit, Tailors you be blowed

Romans came across the Channel, all wrapped up in tin and flannel,  
Half a pint of Woad per man'll dress us more than these.  
Saxons you can waste your stitches  
Building beds for bugs in breeches  
We have Woad to cloth us which is not a nest of fleas

Romans, keep your armours, Saxons your pyjamas  
Hairy coats were meant for goats,  
Retriever dogs, gorillas, Yaks and Llamas

Trek up **Snowdon**, with your Woad on  
Never mind if you get snowed or blown on!  
Never want a button sewed on, go to it Ancient Britons.