



Probus Club of Sydney

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Newsletter

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MARCH 2024

Issue 462

MEETING DATES

MARCH 5

IAN CHESTERMAN AM

From Sydney to Paris to Brisbane
and Beyond

ACTIVITIES

MARCH 18

Sydney's Great Synagogue

CONTENTS

Future Guest Speakers

February Meeting Report

Guest Speaker Report

Social Activities Program

Book Review

A touch of Humour

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen,

Feedback confirms we had a “cracker” of a meeting on February 6th. The talks by our guest speaker Professor Thomas Maschmeyer, Life Before Probus speaker Tony Saunders and Raconteur David Greatorex were highly entertaining and thought-provoking. Attendance was excellent at 71 (56 members and 15 guests), with 58 staying for lunch. The large number of guests must be close to a record, and hopefully many of them will be encouraged to join our Club.

The March meeting will be highlighted by a talk from Ian Chesterman, President of the Australian Olympic Committee. He has been a hard man to tie down with all his travel commitments: thanks to John Doherty for his persistence. The AGM will follow our normal monthly meeting on Tuesday 5 March. Neil Martin (Immediate Past President), David Brand (past Activities Director) and John Doherty (Speakers Organiser) will be stepping down and we owe them great thanks for their years of service.

I'm currently polishing my saddle in preparation for passing on the Presidential Chain and riding off into the sunset. As this is my last Presidential Newsletter contribution, I would like to record that it has been a great honour to serve as President of the PCoS over the last 12 months. The camaraderie, brilliant speakers and the activities have been wonderful. I'd like to thank all the committee members and general members for making the past year of Probus so stimulating and enjoyable.

Best wishes,

John Carter

President

Note

**To Register to attend the March meeting at the Union,
University and Schools Club - [click here](#)**

MARCH 5

Ian Chesterman AM

From Sydney to Paris to Brisbane and Beyond



Ian is an Australian sports administrator serving as the President of the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC). He previously served as a Vice President of the AOC, and most recently the Chef de Mission of the Australian Team for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

He was first elected to the AOC Executive in 2001 and became vice president in 2016. He was the Chef de Mission at six Olympic Winter Games – 1998 Nagano, City, 2006 Torino, 2010 Vancouver, 2014 Sochi and 2018 PyeongChang. In leading the team to Tokyo Ian became the first Australian to head both a summer and winter Olympic Team, and the first to

lead a total of seven Olympic teams. He was also Chef de Mission of the Australian Team to the 2016 Olympic Youth Winter Games in Lillehammer. Ian is on the Board of Brisbane 2032, the Australia Oceania Foundation and is Chair of the Australian Olympic Foundation. He is also on the Executive of Oceania National Olympic Committees. He was made a Life Member of the Australian Olympic Committee in May 2018 and a Member of the Order of Australia in 2019.

John Doherty

FEBRUARY MEETING REPORT

The meeting was opened by President John Carter. He welcomed 15 guests, several of whom are potential new members. He called again for volunteers to help on the front desk at meetings. He also explained why recently inducted member Paul Hansen was unable to attend the meeting. Paul is a member of Disaster Relief Australia and was currently working on flood relief at an Aboriginal community north of Cairns.

John Doherty reported on the speaker's programme for the next few months and announced that Geoff McWilliam will be running the programme from now on. Ted Brogan talked about the harbour tour by the Naval Historical Society on the revised date of 16 February which was booked out.

Inductions

Peter Collette



Peter Collette was introduced by Ted Anderson before being inducted by President John. Peter graduated in medicine from Sydney University in 1968 and has worked as an ENT and micro-surgeon. He developed a consulting service to Moree, Collarenebri, Wee Waa and sometimes Goondiwindi. To add some interest, he gained a pilot's licence so that he could fly to these destinations. In later years he participated in a government programme in an Aboriginal community where he still serves. He developed an interest in long distance bike rides such as Townsville to Cairns. He has crewed a 40 foot boat to Hobart and Brisbane but these days he paddles a kayak around Sydney Harbour. In one word, Ted described Peter as 'understated'.

Jeff Morris



John Doherty introduced new Member Jeff Morris for induction. Jeff is a lawyer and economist who graduated from Sydney University and is closely associated with St Pauls College. He has worked for most of his life with accounting firms such as Touche Ross, Deloitte and so on before becoming involved with banks such as Bankwest and CBA.

Jeff is a widower with two teenage daughters. He is involved in Military History, wine and vintage port and old English cars.

Life before Probus

Tony Saunders



Tony was born in Torquay in England. On leaving college he had two choices – Plymouth University or Canada, so off he went to Canada, arriving in Toronto in mid-winter (think minus 20C) in 1953.

He gained an engineering cadetship at Avro Canada, which was then the world's most innovative aircraft company and the 3rd largest company in the country with 50,000 employees. It was an exciting time with new aircraft being designed including flying saucers!

Tony became a Canadian citizen with the intention of Canada being his forever home. He was drifting towards marriage when disaster struck on 20 February 1959. The Prime Minister closed the company and all 30,000 employees of the aircraft division were entrenched on the spot with no notice. This affected the entire city. The best brains in the company were snapped up by the likes of Boeing and Lockheed and many went to NASA as the core of the

fledgling Manned Space Group but, unfortunately for Tony, he was just a junior engineer and so he had to take whatever temporary jobs he could find, including as a drummer in a dance band! Eventually with no permanent job on the horizon, he returned to Britain, leaving behind a tearful girlfriend who promised to join him in London when he was settled.

He got a job as an engineer with Napier Aero Engines, part of Rolls Royce but, sadly, two months later he received a Dear John letter. The girlfriend had a met and married a policeman! However, he struck lucky, meeting a 'wonderful Australian lady' (Dawn) who was on a working holiday in London. She has been his wife now for 62 years! They emigrated to Los Angeles in 1962 because Dawn couldn't stand the miserable English climate and Tony got a job with Honeywell in their Appliance Controls Division.

In 1965 they travelled to Sydney to meet the in-laws and Tony got a job as an engineer with McPhersons but life was too slow in Australia and they decided to return to LA in 1966. However, a few weeks before leaving, Tony saw an advert for an engineering position with WR Carpenter & Co in the Pacific Islands. This eventually turned into job in Suva for a year before returning again to Sydney head office. Constant travel became a headache and a talk with the company's auditors (Price Waterhouse) led to him joining the company as the first engineer in a then fledgling company of 22 people (compared to 1,800 nowadays). He stayed for 10 years but eventually returned to WR Carpenter as Group General Manager – Personnel but a few years later he was again retrenched. Luckily PW asked him to come back in 1983. Eventually he was approached to become General Manager of a PNG government entity and he and his wife stayed for 4 years in Port Moresby.

He returned to Australia in 1997 and whilst working part time, decided to do more sailing, golf, painting and volunteer work, which he still does. He joined the club in 1997 and is still a member after 27 years!

Raconteur

David Greatorex



David started by telling us a story about George Burns, who, when he turned 100 told an audience that he was not only delighted to be standing in front of them but he was just delighted to be standing anywhere at his age! David is only 90 but he is also delighted to be standing anywhere given his history. Just before World War II his mother was a property developer in Manchester. She had a contract to replace some of the slums in Salford and, to create a home near the development site, she knocked two

houses together to stay on the job.

Unfortunately, just after the war started, they woke up one morning in 1940 to find that the development wasn't there any more. It had been bombed overnight. His

mother then decided it was time to get out. Canada was impossible due to the difficulties of crossing the Atlantic. Australia was a marginally safer passage so passages were booked. However at the last moment the family was bumped from the ship which turned out to be lucky as the ship was sunk with almost total loss of life. This happened again to the next ship but on the third time they were successful, despite being bombed and losing their convoy. They had planned to stop at Durban but they were unable to land because there was an armed German merchantman waiting. Hence David is lucky to be still standing!

Following his education, he got a job with Internal Vending Machines at the very start of the computer revolution and when he left 15 or 16 years later the company had a staff of 400,000 and 70% of the world market in computing! One of the daunting experiences he had as a fairly raw graduate of 24 was to give a computer programming course to a group of PhD's and the like from the CSIRO.

He then told a story about Pine Gap which is not actually part of Australia – it is American! The Prime Minister at the time even denied any knowledge of a 'spy facility' in the middle of the country but David was part of the team who was supplying spare parts to the non-existent facility!

He finished by telling some tales about politicians which are probably best not reported here!

GUEST SPEAKER

Prof Thomas Maschmeyer

Professor of Chemistry, University of Sydney

Translating Local Research onto the Global Stage: Sustainable Aviation Fuels, Mixed Plastic Waste Upcycling and Energy Storage



Professor Maschmeyer gave us a very informative, stimulating and encouraging presentation on the research he leads that is aimed at solving important real world problems using engineering and chemical technologies in an imaginative way and exploiting the benefits of market and economic forces. He is clearly enthusiastic about the potential of Catalysis – the introduction of a small amount of material to speed up chemical processes. He provided an amusing video demonstration involving a small quantity of hydrogen peroxide that showed dramatic results!

He has a particular interest in environmental issues including reducing aircraft emissions through the development from waste materials of sustainable aircraft fuels (SAF) used as a blend, with domestic and global carriers facing increasing regulatory

pressures and the market growing exponentially (with SAF projected to provide 90% of jet fuel by 2050). His initial work using brown coal as a cheap feedstock was technically successful, but politics prevented access to mines in prospective locations like Victoria and Germany. So he and his company team turned to using waste plastics, biomass, used lube oil for catalytic conversion to high value products. Initially their theories were proved at his start-up company Licella, which developed a biomass-based version of the initial brown coal focused technology originated by Ignite Energy. This was extensively supported through interaction with the University of Sydney across the Faculties of Science, Engineering and Business, as well as his own laboratory.

Professor Maschmeyer looks to generate impact as soon as possible, sees it as his public duty. More often than not, this occurs via setting up spin-outs, which allow the off-campus progression to pilot plants, and then to large scale production. Thus far, he has reached global scale three times. There have been some great successes, along with a few failures, such comes with experimentation at the cutting edge.

Successes include Licella Holdings in the waste conversion business (including from Bio Mass to Bio Crude). A local example is at Somersby, NSW where the first pilot plant was built in 2007 and it has been the site of various demonstration models up to 8000 tpa nameplate capacity to prove out the concepts. With the prospect of the world's oceans containing more plastic than fish by 2050 and the mountains of plastic and other wastes going to landfill, his team is pursuing the development of converting mixed plastic waste and other wastes like biomass into useful chemicals and fuels. He gave an example, including Nestle/Coles/Licella, of how a large number of companies need to interact to completely demonstrate a full circular use of waste – producing new KitKat wrappers from end-of-life mixed plastic, now in commercial use. With 30,000 KitKats wrapped in this manner, it was a world-first demonstration of modern recycling success.

Another major success is in energy storage, developed by his team in Sydney and based on the university spin-out Gelion Technologies Pty Ltd, which then listed in London under the name Gelion plc. Here, he is using silicon, zinc and lithium sulphur in leading edge energy storage technologies. The opportunity arises from the huge increase in the need for storage capacity associated with the growth of global renewable energy sources (estimated at US\$5 trillion per annum by 2030) and the abundance of sulphur as a potential alternative to the expensive critical minerals currently used (e.g. nickel, manganese, cobalt). Gelion's technology can be tuned for energy density and long cycle life to meet multiple applications. It is a reflection of his capability and enthusiasm that Professor Maschmeyer has attracted a number of large corporations in energy, packaging and retail, and universities as well as research organisations like CSIRO and ANSTO into a supportive "ecosystem".

In his vote of thanks, on behalf of members Alan Locke congratulated Professor Maschmeyer on his achievements and wished him and his team continued success.

Peter James & Alan Locke

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Future Activities

Monday 18 March:

Sydney's Great Synagogue

9:45-11:30am



The Great Synagogue is the major place of worship for the Jewish community in Sydney. Many of us would often have walked past it in Elizabeth St and wondered what such a unique building, surrounded by modern skyscrapers, was doing there, why it seemed to have such tight security measures and what happens inside.

Described as “a serene spiritual oasis in the midst of the bustling life of the city”, The Synagogue is a unique building and occupies a central place in the Jewish life of Sydney. Despite tour bookings being closed to the public and we are fortunate to have secured a Group Booking.

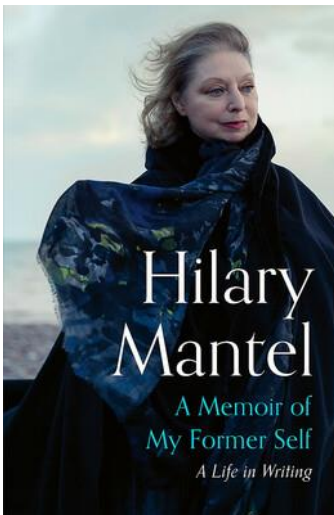
It was designed by the leading Sydney Architect, Thomas Rowe and opened in 1878 and combines Romanesque, Gothic and Moorish design features. As well as a place of worship it includes a war memorial centre, an auditorium and library.

The tour is fully booked but a waitlist will be available.

Ted Brogan

BOOK REVIEW

A Memoir of My Former Self by Hilary Mantel (2023) – 384 pages – non-fiction



Most of us know Hilary Mantel as the author of the Wolf Hall trilogy – each of the first two volumes of which won the Booker Prize. Arguably, she is the all-time greatest writer of historic fiction.

Following her death in 2022, her editor selected an impressive number of short and longer works for this compilation. Perhaps the central features are the Reith Lectures in 2017 (focusing on historical fiction) and the selection of articles connected with Thomas Cromwell.

In relation to historical fiction she has much to say including the fact that the novelist must be true to history “and then performs another act, puts the past back into process, into action, frees the people from the archives and lets them run about,

ignorant of their fates, with all their mistakes unmade” (pages 248 – 249). That is the beauty of the Cromwell Trilogy in that it speaks in the present and the historical characters are presented as living, breathing, mistake-making human beings.

So, you will learn a lot about historical fiction and the difference between the historian and the writer of fiction. She also tackles subjects like Princess Diana, Jane Austen, Biggles, Sir Thomas More, Anne Boleyn and a number of other famous people. Additionally, she was the film critic of the Manchester Guardian for a number of years and many of her best pieces are reproduced.

Perhaps the most controversial entries in some of the articles in this book and in the Trilogy are her treatment of Sir Thomas More (generally revered as a saint) and Thomas Cromwell himself (generally regarded as a villain). Hilary takes a contrary view of both and justifies her treatment in some of the most interesting articles.

This compilation has been very favourably reviewed and is well worth reading – particularly for admirers of Wolf Hall and the other two Cromwell books.

David Castle

A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

Now here is Harold. What a smart boy!

(From Frank Barr-David)

A new teacher was trying to make use of her psychology courses. She started her class by saying, 'Everyone who thinks they're stupid, stand up!' After a few seconds, Little Harold stood up. The teacher said, 'Do you think you're stupid, Harold?' 'No, ma'am, but I hate to see you standing there all by yourself!'

Harold watched, fascinated, as his mother smoothed cold cream on her face. 'Why do you do that, mommy?' he asked. 'To make myself beautiful,' said his mother, who then began removing the cream with a tissue. 'What's the matter, asked Harold 'Giving up?'

The math teacher saw that Harold wasn't paying attention in class She called on him and said, 'Harold! What are 2 and 4 and 28 and 44?' Harold quickly replied, 'NBC, FOX, ESPN and the Cartoon Network!'

Harold's kindergarten class was on a field trip to their local police station where they saw pictures tacked to a bulletin board of the 10 most wanted criminals. One of the youngsters pointed to a picture and asked if it really was the photo of a wanted person. 'Yes,' said the policeman. 'The detectives want very badly to capture him. Harold asked, "Why didn't you keep him when you took his picture ?"

Little Harold attended a horse auction with his father. He watched as his father moved from horse to horse, running his hands up and down the horse's legs and rump, and chest. After a few minutes, Harold asked, 'Dad, why are you doing that?' His father replied, 'Because when I'm buying horses, I have to make sure that they are healthy and in good shape before I buy. Harold, looking worried, said, 'Dad, I think the UPS guy wants to buy Mom'

The Engineer

I recently called an old engineering friend of mine and asked him what he was working on these days.

He replied that was working on Aqua-thermal treatment of ceramics, aluminium and steel under a constrained environment.

I was impressed until, after further enquiries, I realised that he was washing dishes with hot water under his wife's supervision.....

The Preacher

George is stumbling through the woods, totally drunk, when he comes across a preacher baptising people in the river. He proceeds to walk into the water and subsequently bumps into the preacher.

The preacher turns around and is overcome by the smell of alcohol and asks the drunk, "Are you ready to find Jesus?". George answers "Yes, I am!". So the preacher grabs him and dunks his head into the water. He pulls him up and asks "Brother, have you found Jesus?".

George replies "No", so the shocked preacher dunks him again a little longer and asks again "Brother, have you found Jesus?". George again replies "No".

By this time the preacher is at his wit's end and pushes the drunk into the river again but this time holds him down for 30 seconds until he begins kicking his arms and legs and pulls him up. "For the love of God, have you found Jesus?".

George coughs, wipes his eyes, catches his breath and says to the preacher "Are you sure this is where he fell in?".

DRESS CODE FOR THE UUSC

In response to some enquiries from members, the UUSC has provided the following information:

"The rules at the UUSC have not changed. Coat and tie is the standard requirement from level 1 and above with the exception of level 3 which is the business centre.

Mobile phones should not be used in the public areas but may be used in function rooms. Members and visitors are encouraged to have their phones turned to silent or vibration."

HOW TO CONTACT A COMMITTEE MEMBER

To contact any committee member [Click here](#)

Please use email where possible or telephone if you require urgent contact.