

The Misbourne Club

Occasional Newsletter Issue 7 - August 2025

Dear fellow Misbourne Club members,

A warm welcome to this edition of our Occasional Newsletter.

As you will read, it is full of interesting articles all contributed by our members and compiled by our editor John Suckling.

Our regular monthly meetings at the Kings Arms are going well and you have told us that the quality of the lunches are pretty good. We continue to have a good speaker every time which I know you look forward to.

Our annual outing this year took place in July featured a voyage on the Thames and a visit to The Savill Garden.



Windsor Castle from the Thames at Datchet



Alstroemeria with red hot pokers at Saville Garden

We are planning more outings so keep an eye open for updates from our Secretary Peter Spring.

Our regular monthly walks have been most enjoyable, even if on occasions lightly attended. . Do remember that if you're unable to come on the walk you would be most welcome to join us at our pub lunch afterwards.

Since the last newsletter, we have been joined by several new members who will not have seen previous copies and for that reason the final article in this newsletter is a reprint of the previously published Club's History. If, out of interest, you would like to see any of the past Newsletters please contact John Suckling.

Whilst on the subject of new members we are always on the look-out for more. So if you know anybody who might be interested in attending the Club please let me or one of the committee members know.

We have been getting good ideas and feedback from many of you, thank you. We welcome your suggestions to help shape how we go forward!

With very best wishes

David Ouvry
Chairman

CONTENTS:

A big thank you to all our contributors

1.	History of Gentlemen's Luncheon Clubs in England by John Suckling	page 2
2.	A Moving Experience by Tim Phillips	page 4
3.	Driving Laws Revisited by Peter Spring	page 5
4.	A youthful Adventure by Michael Cohn	page 7
5.	The Village Pond (1984 near Lusaka Zambia) by Tony Felts	page 9
6.	LORDS and LADYBIRDS by David Ouvry	page 10
7.	Other Special Shows this Summer by David Ouvry	page 11
8.	Your garden in the Autumn by Steve Riley	page 12
9.	Confessions of an Observer: Tales from the Advanced Driver's Seat by Peter Spring	page 14
10.	THE MISBOURNE CLUB A short History of its Origins & Development	page 15

History of Gentlemen's Luncheon Clubs in England

by John Suckling with support from the Internet

The history of gentlemen's luncheon clubs in England is intertwined with social, political, and cultural developments throughout the centuries. These clubs have often been associated with the British upper classes, aristocracy, and later the emerging middle class, serving as spaces for networking, intellectual discussion, leisure and, fellowship.

Early Beginnings: 17th Century

The origins of these clubs can be traced back to the 17th century.

During the reign of Charles II (1660–1685), the English upper classes began to meet in private social clubs. These early forms of clubs were often gathering spots for socializing and intellectual exchange, often over a drink or meal. The Royal Society, founded in 1660, was an example of such an intellectual gathering, though it was scientifically focussed.

The 17th century also saw the rise of the “coffee house” culture, which played a crucial role in the development of gentlemen's clubs. Coffee houses in London became popular places for men to meet, converse, and conduct business. These establishments could be seen as the precursors to the private clubs that would later emerge. They were important for social and political discourse and were often frequented by the intellectual and political elite of the time.

18th Century: The Rise of Private Clubs

By the 18th century, private gentlemen's clubs began to take shape. These clubs were typically exclusive, often by invitation only, and would offer a refined setting where wealthy and influential men could meet regularly. The term "gentleman's club" referred to these spaces specifically for men, as women were generally excluded.

By the mid-1700s, clubs were becoming more organised, with members paying annual fees in exchange for privileges such as dining, conversation, and access to resources like newspapers and libraries.

White's (founded 1693) is one of the most famous early examples. Initially a gaming club, it evolved into one of London's most exclusive spots for political and social elites.

Brooks's (founded 1764) was another prominent club that became a meeting point for politicians and intellectuals, particularly around the time of the American Revolution.

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19th Century: Expansion and Specialisation

The 19th century saw the expansion and specialization of these clubs. Many of the gentlemen's clubs were now becoming fully formed institutions, with their own distinctive culture and identity. Some clubs had a very specific focus, such as those for sports enthusiasts or military men. The Victorian era also saw an increased sense of formality, and many of these clubs codified their rules, codes of conduct, and dress were introduced.

The Reform Act of 1832 and the rise of industrialisation contributed to new wealth, and this saw the formation of new clubs. These individuals were often keen to emulate the established aristocracy. Some of the most famous gentlemen's clubs in London today date from this period. For example:

- The Reform Club (1836), which was specifically founded to cater to political figures and reformers.
- The Athenaeum (1824), known for attracting literary and artistic figures.

20th Century: Decline and Changing Role

In the early 20th century, gentlemen's clubs continued to thrive, but social changes began to affect their membership. World War I, and World War II, contributed to changes in the social and economic landscape.

Mobility, changing gender roles, and the rise of other social institutions (like pubs, cafes, and later, professional organizations) made these clubs less central to social and political life.

In particular, the long-standing exclusion of women from many of these clubs began to be seen as increasingly outdated. Women's rights movements and societal changes led to pressure on these exclusive clubs to adapt. A significant turning point came in the latter half of the 20th century, with some clubs opening their doors to women (e.g., the Ritz Club in the 1960s).

However, many prestigious clubs remained male-only until the 1990s.

Modern Day

Today, gentlemen's clubs in England remain a part of British heritage, though their role has changed significantly. Many are now focused on networking, charitable services, and leisure rather than political or intellectual discourse. Their exclusivity has waned, with many modern clubs opening up to broader membership, and the traditional "Old Boys' Network" that many of these institutions once represented is now a more distant memory reflecting the changing social attitudes of modern Britain.

Conclusion

The history of gentlemen's luncheon clubs in England is one of social evolution, marking the movement from a world of strictly defined social hierarchies to a more inclusive, modern membership. These clubs played an essential role in the political, social, and intellectual life of the country for centuries, and while their role has diminished in terms of influence, they remain a unique part of Britain's heritage.



A Moving Experience by Tim Phillips

The one thing I have now learnt about moving home to downsize, is that, like marriage, it is not to be undertaken lightly or wantonly. Now on my own, it was clear that a move ,after having lived in the same home for 57 years, was going to be stressful. Even with the most careful preparation the hardest part of the move has been in finding space in the new home for all those treasures that have been safely stored away, and mostly not accessed, for the past 20 years. What to keep and what to throw?

My first good – indeed essential - action was to hire a lady whose business it is to help people to “declutter” their homes. She was brilliant and we worked together well with me making the decisions, but her planning and executing the actions. The first thing we did was to order a large, 6 tonne, skip, which I soon filled, mainly with stuff from my overcrowded garage. (we eventually filled another skip). She made a plan of my new premises on her computer and put onto it the furniture that I hoped and wanted to take. She made numerous visits to the charity shops to take unwanted things and found a charity that would take all those books that I could bear to part with.

To all those who think they ought to declutter, but somehow never get round to doing it, I do recommend hiring someone like my de-cluttering lady!

The next stage was the preparation of the new (to me) home. I was fortunate to get the agreement of the vendor to bring in decorators to refurbish the apartment between exchanging contracts and completion. With only 4 weeks from the New Year to completion they did a really good job and completed the work needed on time - just, including a putting in a new en-suite, but not including work on the kitchen and the second bathroom. But it was touch and go and a longer preparation time would have been good. Also; beware the cost of new curtains and blinds!

My declutter lady had organised the removal people, who did a great job in packing all my stuff. However, I was horrified to find that I had well over one hundred large cardboard boxes to empty. They were marked with the room that the contents were to be put, not always accurately, but with no note of the actual contents. The result was that to start with I could not get my filing cabinets into my study, (they were temporarily stored in the garage); nor could I empty the boxes in the kitchen, as they were piled on the work surface! This is not a criticism of the removals firm, but recognition that there was still much work to do before I could settle comfortably and relax in my new home.

Six months later the situation is much improved, but there are still boxes in the garage (do not move without a garage!), and stuff already un-boxed, but waiting to be found a home. People keep telling me that their garage is still cluttered with boxes years later, which I am not sure is a comfort. I hope it will not be too long before I can get my pictures hanging on the walls and to feel really well settled. I have exchanged a large garden for 4 acres of well-maintained grounds, the upkeep of which I am not responsible. It is a good move for someone now of advanced age.

TFP 24th July 2025.

Driving Laws Revisited

by Peter Spring

Dual carriageway lane closures.

We've all been there. Cruising along a dual carriageway, humming to ourselves, when a dreaded temporary sign appears: "Lane Closed Ahead." Rule 134 of the Highway Code states: "You should follow the signs and road markings and get into the lane as directed".



So, being a model citizen, you dutifully join the back of the queue. It might stretch for 100 yards... or 1000. Then, like a scene from a low-budget action film, a rogue driver barrels down the closing lane, slips in at the front, and vanishes into the distance. You mutter something unprintable. But here's the twist:

They're not wrong. You are because Rule 134 continues: Merging in turn is recommended but only if safe and appropriate when vehicles are travelling at a very low speed, e.g: when approaching road works or a road traffic incident.

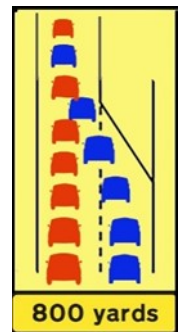
This technique is called zip merging, and while it may feel like queue-jumping, it's actually more efficient — and less rage-inducing — than the British instinct to form a single, mile-long line of quiet resentment.

📌 Why Zip Merging Works

Research shows two key benefits:

- Shorter queues: Using both lanes reduces queue length by up to 40%.
- Less road rage: When everyone's crawling at the same speed, no one feels cheated — just equally miserable.

In Germany, zip merging is the law. In the UK, it's more like a polite suggestion — often ignored in favour of tutting and passive-aggressive head shakes.



📌 Did you know that.....

📌 *Sleeping in Your Car After Drinking.*

Think you're being responsible by sleeping it off in your car? Think again. If you're found intoxicated in charge of a vehicle — even if you're asleep — you could face:

- 10 penalty points
- A fine
- Possible jail time
- A 12-month driving ban

Fortunately the law doesn't care if you're snoring but If you have the keys and access to the controls, you're considered "in charge."

📌 *Dirty Number Plates*

If your registration isn't clearly visible, it's a fine waiting A mucky plate could cost you up to £1,000.

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📞 *Paying by Phone at a Drive-Through*

Contactless payment at the drive-thru seems harmless, right?

Wrong. If your engine's running and you're using your phone, it's technically illegal and a potential penalty of

- 6 points
- Up to £1,000 fine

To stay safe: engine off, handbrake on, then tap away.

🚗 *Driving Too Slowly*

Speed limits aren't just ceilings — they're also floors. Driving significantly below the limit can be classed as careless driving, especially if you're causing a hazard.

Penalties include:

- 3 points
- £100 on-the-spot fine

So yes, caution is good — but don't turn the A41 into a Sunday stroll.

🚗 *Parking Against the Flow*

Rule 248 of the Highway Code says: "you MUST NOT park on a road at night facing against the direction of the traffic flow unless in a recognised parking space.

Why? Because headlights don't illuminate the rear of parked cars.

Fines can reach: £1,000 for cars and £2,500 for vans or minibuses.

🚗 *You Can Drive in Flip-Flops — But Should You?*

Contrary to popular belief, there's no specific law banning flip-flops, high heels, or even barefoot driving. However, if your footwear affects your control of the vehicle, it could be deemed careless or dangerous driving. So while it's legal, it's not always smart. Sensible shoes = safer stops.

🐕 *Dogs Must Be Restrained*

Rule 57 of the Highway Code states: "When in a vehicle make sure dogs or other animals are suitably restrained."

Unrestrained pets can: - Distract the driver, - Become projectiles in a crash, - Lead to fines and points for careless driving

🍔 *Eating While Driving Isn't Illegal — But It Can Be*

There's no law against munching a sandwich at the wheel. But if it causes distraction or affects your control, it could be classed as careless driving. Same goes for drinking.

And If You Thought UK Laws Were Odd...

A Few Gems from Across the Pond

- Alabama: It's illegal to drive blindfolded. (Good to know.)
- Massachusetts: You can carry a gorilla in the front seat. But not the back!!
- California & Tennessee: You may shoot animals from your car — unless it's a whale. (Tennessee is landlocked, so... good luck.)
- Maine: Parking in front of a Dunkin' Donuts is illegal.

A youthful Adventure

Michael Cohn has agreed to share an experience from his youth which was rekindled by the discovery of the newspaper cutting, shown below, which documented his role as guide and manager for a party of Americans undertaking a tour of Europe in 1969.

It was a holiday job that Michael applied for and got! Although, as Michael says it is highly unlikely in this day and age that a 20 year-old would be appointed in such a role.

The article was published in 1969 in what was known as The Ham and High local paper. For ease of reading, the newspaper article has been reproduced on the following page.

Hamstead & Highgate Express and Hampstead Garden Suburb & Golders Green News 3

STUDENT SAW EUROPE AT A PROFIT

Back from an eight-week tour of Scandinavia and Europe which took in 10 countries and 7000 miles and didn't cost him a penny — in fact he was paid for going — is 20-year-old Michael Cohn, a chemistry student, of Platts Lane, Hampstead.

Michael led a party of 35 American students on the tour which started in Holland, took in parts of Scandinavia, covered the length of Europe and ended in England.

A second year student at St. Andrew's University, Edinburgh, Michael speaks French and German.

When the party of 31 girls and 24 boys arrived in Berlin they visited the Eastern sector. They were amazed at the state of the city.

"It looks just like London after the war," said Michael. "There are still bombed buildings and the place is deserted. We were struck by the barrenness of the place. We never saw anyone. The only place that has any colour is the sector's showpiece, Stalin Alley.

"The shops are shoddy. We had a cup of coffee at a restaurant and it was incredibly bad.

Russians feared

"The Americans have a real fear of the Russians. They seem really to hate them."

A visit was also made to a refugee camp in West Berlin.

In the Western sector the picture was entirely different. The shops were gay and full of modern goods and appliances. To reach Berlin the party travelled for 30 hours from Oslo, having previously visited Copenhagen and Stock-

holm. From Berlin they went to Heidelberg, Munich and Vienna.

In the Austrian capital they heard a Strauss open-air concert in the town hall square given by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. "That was really beautiful. The Americans seem to have a deep knowledge of arts and music."

In Vienna one of the girls became homesick and went home. The rest of the party went on to Rome where they heard an open-air opera in the baths of Caracalla.

Sat too much

Next the party went on to Monte Carlo, Geneva and Paris. At SHAPE headquarters near Paris they were briefed on European defence by leading NATO officials.

"The students were well behaved," said Michael. "My only complaint is that Americans have a habit of sitting on steps when they are waiting. In their colleges and on the campus they have massive steps and they sit anywhere. It was most embarrassing."

In England Michael took the party to Oxford and Stratford, where they attended a performance of Two Gentlemen of Verona at the Memorial Theatre. They also visited York, the Lake District and Edinburgh, where they were in time for the Festival.

Michael now hopes to visit America.



YOUTH GAOLED FOR 'SAVAGE' ATTACK ON PC

At Clerkenwell on Monday a 17-year-old railway fireman, George Edward Barnett, of Chestnut House, Maitland Park Villas, Chalk Farm, was gaoled for 14 days for assaulting PC Alan McLeod in Kentish Town Road on 4 September.

At an earlier hearing he had appeared with two other youths, the three being accused of insulting behaviour whereby a breach of the peace might have been caused. Barnett was additionally charged with assaulting PCs McLeod and John Corner. He admitted assaulting PC McLeod but not guilty to assaulting PC Corner and was remanded in custody to see whether a vacancy could be found for him.

END LOOK

Student saw Europe at a profit

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The article contains some errors both grammatical and spelling which have not been changed, however, there is one major mistake which must be corrected.

The article states Michael was a second year student at St. Andrew's University, Edinburgh.

Michael was indeed a second year student at the University of St Andrews which is NOT to be confused with the later founded Edinburgh University!

As a post script after the tour finished Michael was presented with the following poem.

*When we first met in Amsterdam
the bloody 3 and ye
We thought t,would a happy trip be
On this GB3
But as the days went slowly by
The headaches grew and grew
Luggage here and trench coats there
Not knowing what to do
Breakfast at eight, and breakfast at six
and carry your hand luggage too
All this we did old boy
For you and only you*

*And when in Salzburg you did come
Your senses at half mast
It took we three to sober you up
Until it had all past
So here's to you and your drunkenness
And all the good times we had
We hope this trip has left you
with memories good not bad
Now drink a toast to the golden bears
But careful watch the foam
For it's no longer that you'll
have us three to come and carry you home*

Signed: 'the 3 trench-coat trouble makers Leslie, Betsy and Jean'

The Village Pond (1984 near Lusaka Zambia)

by Tony Felts

In many parts of Asia, household ponds are a familiar sight—small, practical bodies of water dug beside individual homes, used for rearing fish, washing, and, all too often, as open-air latrines. But in much of rural Africa, the pond is not a private convenience. It is a shared, vital centrepiece of village life—a place of necessity, and sometimes of danger.

As I remember this particular village pond was located at the side of a small village and about the size of a small football pitch. Indeed probably in the dry season when the water levels were much lower that is exactly what some of it would have been used for. It was brown in colour, with mud stirred up by the movements of people and animals alike. During the scorching, airless afternoons, it shimmered beneath a film of heat. Children splashed along its banks, while cattle and goats waded in to drink or cool off, their hooves churning up the muddy bottom. Women came with basins balanced on their heads, scrubbing laundry against worn stones, laughing and gossiping as they worked. There was something timeless about it—something almost idyllic—until tragedy struck, as it sometimes did.

Unlike a controlled swimming pool, a village pond is not fenced or guarded. Its murky depths hold no markers of depth or danger. And so, it was not uncommon for a child, drawn in by the play or the heat, to slip under unnoticed, swallowed quickly by the opaque water. As a member of a scuba diving club, I had, on occasion, been called upon to do something no one ever really wishes to do: locate and recover the bodies of the drowned.

One such call has stayed with me for years.

A young boy had gone missing near the pond in the early afternoon, and as evening drew close with no sign of him, the village chief and local police reached out to us for help. By the time our small team of divers arrived, a silent, uneasy crowd had gathered around the water's edge—parents clutching children close, elders frowning, the chief standing with arms folded, his eyes scanning the pond as if it might surrender its secret if he stared long enough.

We knew from experience that bodies don't usually float right away. In still, warm water, they often sink for days before gases build up and they rise to the surface. But in this climate—hot, humid, and unforgiving—waiting was not an option. The sooner the body was found, the less traumatic the recovery, both for the family and for the community. We were keenly aware of that as we donned our gear and began preparing for the search.

The pond was deceptively large—perhaps an acre in size—and deepest in the centre, where it dropped to about 8 to 10 feet. The water was thick with silt and debris, offering no visibility at all. Even with head-torches, the only thing we could see was our own breath bubbling back to us. The search had to be done entirely by feel.

We anchored a long rope at the centre of the pond and spaced ourselves along it like the spokes of a wheel. With gloved hands stretched out in front of us, we began a slow, methodical sweep, circling the anchor point, inching forward with each pass. Every so often, one of us would tug the rope once or twice—a signal to the surface team that we were repositioning or had touched something worth checking. Most times, it was nothing: a submerged branch, a tangle of weeds, or a discarded piece of cloth. But always there was the gnawing anxiety: what if the next thing I touched was the boy?

There is something profoundly unsettling about searching for a human body in total darkness. Every brush of a plant or shift in the current plays tricks on your mind. And the knowledge that the pond was still in active use—livestock still grazing nearby, villagers standing ankle-deep on the edge—added a layer of unpredictability. A sudden splash could mean a cow had decided to join us, or that someone above had lost patience with the wait.

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The Village Pond continues

On our second circuit, one of my teammates gave three short, urgent tugs. We all froze, waiting for the surface team to respond. A moment later, the rope slackened, then pulled tight again twice. Slowly, solemnly, we surfaced and the body was lifted and brought to shore.

The crowd had grown. Nearly the entire village had turned out, their faces etched with grief and curiosity. The boy's mother collapsed to her knees, wailing, as neighbours tried gently to support her. The body was wrapped respectfully in a sheet, and the police took over from there. No one spoke to us directly, but the gratitude was clear in their eyes, in the solemn nods and quiet murmurs. Our work, though grim, had brought some measure of closure.

That evening, as the sun sank low and the air finally began to cool, we packed up in silence. There was no celebration, no camaraderie typical of a dive. But even amid the sorrow, I felt a quiet pride. We were not just hobbyists that day—not just people who explored reefs and shipwrecks for fun. We had answered a call, performed a service that mattered deeply to a grieving family and a shaken community. And though I will never forget the feel of that water, heavy with silt and sorrow, I hold tight to the knowledge that we helped bring that little boy home.

Tony Felts

LORDS and LADYBIRDS

by David Ouvry

We have had a very wet start in spring followed by a balmy, dry and mostly sunny summer this year and this has certainly affected some of our 6 legged friends.



For example on July 12th, a test match between England and India was interrupted and had to stop for a while because a swarm of ladybirds invaded the pitch.

How come? the early warm wet provoked an explosion of aphids feeding on the abundant plant sap, and ladybirds feed on aphids and they multiplied too. But the continued dry weather caused the aphid population to collapse the ladybirds we're in crisis as they had no food and they began to swarm together find a new food source.

That is how and why they stopped a cricket match!



OTHER SPECIAL SHOWS THIS SUMMER pictures and text by David Ouvry

We have had a exceptional weather, a wet start in spring followed by a balmy, dry and mostly sunny summer which has resulted in increased numbers of moth and butterfly.



THE JERSEY TIGER MOTH

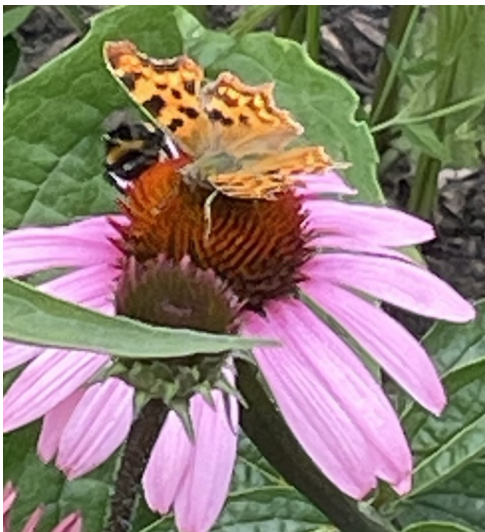
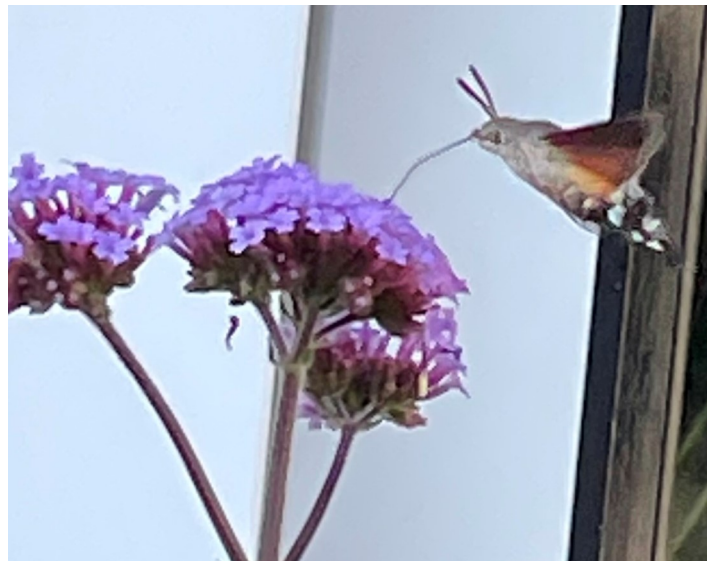
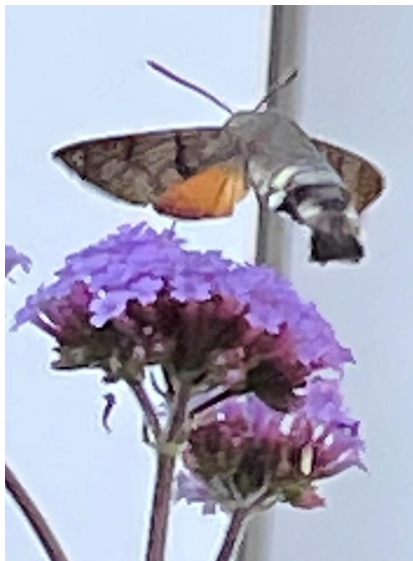
This gaudy moth, so called because of the tiger stripes on its upper wings, used to be seen sparingly in the south of England but it has appeared in large numbers in the gardens in Bucks this year.

A symptom of global warming?

THE HUMMINGBIRD HAWK MOTH

It hums and whirs like a tropical hummingbird. It is a moth that may be seen in your garden. The 'beak' is its long proboscis or feeding tube.

It can be seen here feeding from the flowers of *Verbena bonariensis* in an Amersham garden, June 2025.



THE COMMA BUTTERFLY (note wavy edged wings)

When the Misbourne Club visited Savill Garden on our summer outing in June, we were looking at the glorious display of flowers when this Comma was seen landing and then feeding on an Echinacea flower, in the company of a Buff-tail bumblebee. The warm weather has seen a welcome resurgence in at least the commoner butterflies this year.

Your garden in the Autumn by Steve Riley

After the joys of a spring garden when plants come back to life and the colour of summer flowers, autumn is often seen as a rather dull time in the garden and the temptation is to leave the garden to look after itself. Indeed, the near constant rain from October onwards last year forced many of us to do just that – we had 4 ‘ton bags’ of mushroom compost delivered last autumn and two and a half bags remained on the front drive soaking up the rain until March!

Here are a few jobs you might like to think about doing in the autumn on a fine day (some can even be done indoors). The more you can get through, the better your garden will perform next year.

1 Mulch

Many perennials benefit from a good layer of mulch so protect your investment and put them under a cosy layer for the winter. eg hostas, peonies, roses, daylilies, clematis, hydrangea, verbenas, bonariensis and astilbe. When we mulch delphiniums and soft stemmed salvias, we add plenty of horticultural sand to the mulch to try and stop it retaining too much water and rotting the plant. In the spring when the plants start growing again, simply fork the mulch into the ground around your plants.

2 Lift

Some tender herbaceous perennials should be lifted and stored until next year in a dry, airy, cool place (such as garage or shed) eg dahlias, cannas, tuberous begonias and gladioli. Do this before the first frosts of autumn.

3 Perennials

If your clumps of perennials are spreading too much (often resulting in a ‘bald’ patch in the middle!) or are getting congested, autumn is the ideal time to divide and replant them. If you have too many to replant, before you dump them on your compost heap or into your green bin, check with friends and neighbours if they’d like some. We know lots of youngsters where cash for gardening is low on their priority list who welcome ‘freebies’.

Cut down any dead or collapsed stems on perennials. Most perennials can be cut to just above ground level at this time of year but penstemons and soft stemmed salvias need the shelter of this year’s growth to protect them from frost so remove any dead flowerheads but do not cut down the stems until next spring after the frosts have passed.

4 Plant spring bulbs

Hopefully last spring’s bulbs will have survived the pesky squirrels and muntjacs but if you need to plant more bulbs, get them in the ground before November. We have started moving over to shorter stemmed species as the tall varieties get knocked about by the strong winds we are getting these days.

5 Conditioning soil

This one is a bit contentious! Some people prefer to add soil conditioner in the springtime. This is not our preference – we add mushroom compost to the soil mixed in with plenty of fine bark chippings and plenty of horticultural sand. We do this as we go round the garden mulching certain plants (using the same mix on the whole). The reason we do not wait until spring is that we find the compost/bark/sand mix helps stop the soil getting as compacted by heavy rain as it might otherwise do. Also in the spring when some plants are still hiding underground and can’t be seen, it’s easier to damage new growth so we avoid adding conditioner then. I’m sure lots of you will disagree with this!

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6 Stakes

It seems to be windier these days in the autumn and winter, so check that any stakes you have put on young trees etc are firmly in place (they do move around in soggy ground, so keep checking over the winter). Also please check that you are not strangling whatever you have staked in the past – tree trunks grow thicker surprisingly fast and what was a good fit last year may be a tight fit this year so the strap may need loosening a little.

7 Lawn

Scarify your lawn to remove thatch, give the lawn a final mow (raise the cutter blades). Fertilise with an autumn lawn feed. Rake fallen leaves off the lawn (such a boring job!!).

8 Cleaning

- If you have a water butt, empty and pressure hose the inside of it. They get surprisingly mucky and you don't want to be using grubby water on your plants next year.
- Drain down and put insulation/weatherproofing on any outside taps.
- Give your bird feeders a good clean before refilling.
- In our windy garden, we use a lot of plant supports when spring growth is underway, so autumn is a good time to wash the supports when we take them out of the ground when trimming back perennials and spreading mulch etc. After washing (using bio washing up liquid), once they are dry, we wipe them with WD40 before storing them away for next year.
- Clean and sharpen your garden tools – and give them a good spray of WD40 before putting them away for the winter. The Stihl 3-in-1 sharpener is good. Under £20 if you look around – much cheaper than new secateurs or lawn edgers.
- If you planted some pots for summer flowering, empty the pots, clean (a little bleach in the water is recommended by some) and pressure wash.

9 Servicing machinery

Lawn mower servicing/blade sharpening is generally cheaper in the winter so book your service now. Other garden machinery may benefit from a bit of TLC too – hedge trimmers, leaf blowers etc. We use Browns in Chesham.

10 Winter planting

A tub of winter planting cheers us all up. Pansies, cyclamen etc all for a reasonable price in Amer-sham Market in the autumn and weeks of colour to brighten the long winter days when you look out of your windows longing for spring. Go on, spoil yourself – you deserve it after another busy year in the garden.

Happy Gardening!!

Confessions of an Observer: Tales from the Advanced Driver's Seat by Peter Spring

One of my hobbies — if you can call mild adrenaline spikes a hobby — is teaching Advanced Driving for IAM-RoadSmart. It's a rewarding role, centred entirely around the Associate (the trainee, though we're not supposed to call them that — apparently it sounds too much like a Hogwarts student). My job? Help them rise to a higher standard of road craft, ideally without rising my blood pressure.

They arrive in all shapes and temperaments:

- * Naturals who instinctively know where every wheel should be,
- * Anxious types convinced there's a runaway elephant around every bend,
- * And those whose interest begins and ends with the phrase, "My dad thought it'd be good for me."

Most Associates are interesting. Some are infuriating. Enter George — a reluctant participant whose only known motivation is that Daddy paid. Possibly George is here under duress and would prefer canal root treatment.

It's Monday morning. Light drizzle. George is 11 minutes late. He parks, remains in the car, and waits for me to approach like a butler delivering a tray of tea. I get in. He glances up from his phone and mumbles something halfway between "hello" and a sigh.

"Today," I say cheerfully, "we're tackling bends and country lanes." With another grunt/sigh/guttural sound we start. Turn left out of the car park please I say. The wipers screech across the windscreen leaving streaks that suggest they retired sometime during the Blair administration. The inside mists up. I eventually ask, "Can you see?" He sighs and prods the fan into action. Visibility is restored. Just about.

George likes bends. So do I — when they're taken properly. "Move towards the centre line for a better view," I suggest. "Remember what I said about limit points?" He grunts. "Match your speed to the movement of the limit point." He considers this. "Oh," he replies, as if he's just discovered gravity.

Then it's onto the country lanes. Overnight rain and drizzle mean soggy leaves blanket the surface, puddles glint innocently down each verge like they're hiding something. "Spot any hazards?" I ask, with the optimism of a man who's clearly forgotten last week. "No," he replies. "What about skid risk from the leaves? Or deep potholes hiding in the puddles?" A pause. Then his now familiar nod to understanding: "Oh." Victory — of sorts.

Tuesday brings brighter news — Caroline. Always early. Always enthusiastic. Before I've settled in the passenger seat, she launches into her pre-drive checklist: "Tyres checked, no damage, full tank of fuel. She looks at me expectantly, like she's just passed a NASA launch protocol.

"Excellent," I say. "Did you revise gear changing like I recommended after our last session?" "No, but I did the rolling brake test thingy on the way here." Unexpected — but progress is progress.

We begin the drive. "Did you think about block changing before the roundabout?" I ask. "No," she says, "the pretty pink car behind me was distracting." To be fair, last week she thought mirrors were decorative.

Onto the A41, heading towards Berkhamsted. "Remember," I remind, "advanced drivers are swift and look to make progress." "Yes," she says. "Then why are we cruising at 35mph on a national speed limit road?" "Safety first," she counters, with the air of someone quoting a family motto stitched on a tea towel.

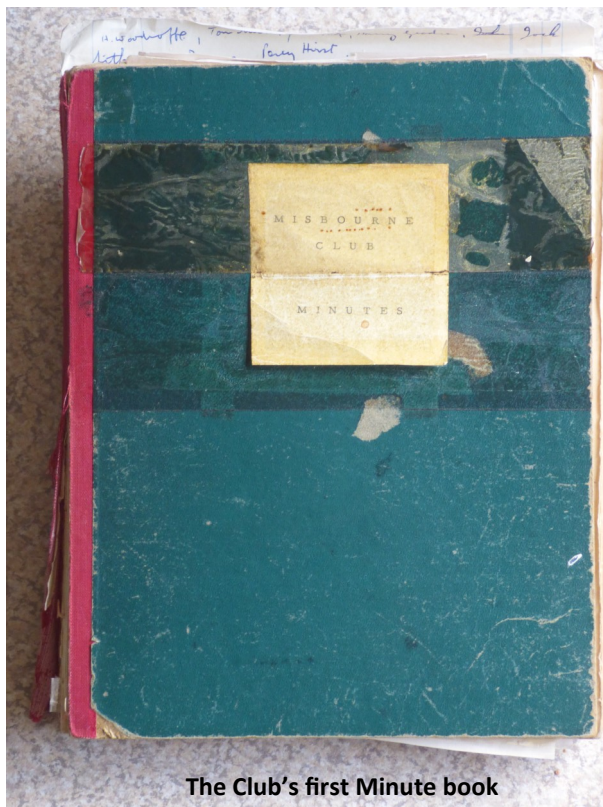
I quietly cancel my bend-practice plan. Forty-five minutes later, we've reached the dizzying velocity of 60mph. I consider notifying the Guinness World Records. As the session closes, I chirp, "Same place, same time next week. And don't forget: block changing, mirror use and making progress." "Oh, absolutely," she replies. "But you did like my pre-drive checks this time, didn't you?"

THE MISBOURNE CLUB

A short History of its Origins & Development

Occasionally it is worth reflecting on the past and to remember how we came to where we are. The longer serving members of the Club will be familiar with some of the history of the Club but newer members might like to know how it began.

The formation of what became The Misbourne Club was down to John Grimmer when an interim meeting was held at his house in Doggets Wood on 7th February 1969. Present were Ernest Post (who took the Chair), John Grimmer (acting Secretary) and five other founding members, Harold Morris, Dick Coker, Ralph Flanders, Alfred Gee and Robert Gwyn Jones.



The Club's first Minute book

The inaugural meeting took place on 6 March 1969 in what was then the Millstream Restaurant in old Amersham. (The Millstream restaurant no longer exists and is now Ambers, a select ladies fashion shop.) In addition to the seven founding members the March meeting was attended by nineteen other founder members. An Agenda and other significant papers had been circulated prior to the meeting. It is not known if the business of the meeting took place pre or post the meal but clearly much was achieved. Ernest Post was confirmed as Chairman, John Grimmer as Secretary and Harold Morris elected Hon Treasurer. The other founding members were elected to the Committee with exception of Robert Gwyn Jones who was leaving the district and did not stand.

The proposed constitution & rules for the Club were circulated prior to the meeting and these were agreed by those present. The main criteria of the Constitution being that the Club be non-political, non- sectarian, for retired business and professional gentlemen.

It is a tribute to the integrity of the founding members that apart from a little tweaking now and again (to reflect changing times) the constitution & rules are still in use today.

Two names were proposed for the Club; Colonia and Misbourne but the latter was considered more appropriate.

Membership was set at 50 with a joining fee of ten shillings. The annual subscription was agreed at 10 shillings and sixpence. (Further research in the minutes revealed this was decided by the accommodation limitations of the lunch venue,)

It was agreed the newly named Misbourne Club would meet once a month for lunch.

The meal, at the inaugural meeting, cost 11 shillings plus 10% service.

From the outset consideration was given to providing as many social/sporting functions and outings as members would support. The first recorded event was a Golf Day at Harewood Downs GC on 30 May 1969. Tee off was at 9:00am with singles in the morning and foursomes in the afternoon. Fee for GC members was £1.0.6d and non-members £1.15.0d inclusive of lunch, tea and gratuities.

In June 1969 the Club jointly hosted a Garden Party with stalls, sideshows & refreshments.

The Misbourne Club was a success from its inception. A report to members 7 months from the inaugural meeting declared a full membership of 50 with a waiting list. The same report stated that *"The Committee would like to be able to arrange the lunch in a large Restaurant with a more varied menu. We hope to be able to report something to you soon."*

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The Club's minutes show that members undertook a variety of visits/activities in addition to golf and theatre. Visits were organised to the Metropolitan Police Horse Show, Didcot Power Station, Brevet Shoe factory and not to forget BBC TV studios (The Wogan Show).

Talks were also a feature of the luncheons covering a variety of subjects: Surgical Instruments, Local Government, The night I shot an Elephant, Channel Tunnel Rolling Stock, to name just a few.

One of the early activities of The Misbourne Club was the Annual Holiday. Members with their wives visited numerous places such as the Isle of Wight, Tenby, Woolacombe, Sandbanks, Aldeburgh & Sidmouth. The 1987 proposed Annual Holiday was to Bournemouth but they eventually discontinued due to falling support.

Not surprisingly the Club's luncheon venues have changed with the passage of time. The monthly luncheons at the Millstream continued until 1970 when it was decided to move to the Tudor Room at the Crown Hotel. Following alterations to the Hotel in 1985 the venue changed almost annually in an effort to obtain acceptable fare and accommodation. For a while the Club luncheons were held at Chesham United Football Club's Chess Suite in conjunction with Alpine Caterers. However, in October 1991 the records show a falling out with those providing the catering facilities and the Misbourne Club moved to Guido's Italian Restaurant in top Amersham. Guido's restaurant provided a stable base for the Club's luncheons until Thursday 1st December 2016 with a final lunch. Guidos closed at the end of December 2016 pending redevelopment of the site. From January 2017 the luncheon venue has been the King's Chapel part of the King's Arms in old Amersham.

A recurring theme for the Club from the outset has been the promotion of good fellowship. Harry Goodson, then Chairman, wrote to members on 6th July 1989;

"You will be aware that one of the prime objects of our Club is the promotion of good fellowship. From time to time, both formally at meetings and informally to members of the Committee, representations have been made by a not insignificant number of members that the use of reserve cards, coupled in some cases by "block booking" of tables has tended to operate against the desirable mixing of members to achieve wider fellowship.

Accordingly, your committee have considered the matter, and has decided to institute on an experimental basis for the months of August, September and October this year, a new system for our monthly luncheons.

The table places will be numbered. On paying for the lunch and collecting his name card, the member will draw at random a number, and for that luncheon only he will sit at the place at the tables marked with the corresponding number. The only reserved places which will be specifically allocated in advance will be those for the Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and the Speaker.

It is appreciated that some members will not welcome this change initially, but I would ask for their co-operation and tolerance. After the expiry of the three months we can review the situation and decide on our future pattern of seating at our luncheons."

He subsequently reported on 4th January 1990, the year the Club celebrated its 21st Birthday; "You may be wondering what happened about our experimental seating trial period last year? 93% of members registered an opinion. Of these 72% voted in favour of continuing of seating by direction."

Despite the Club members mandate the Committee, under the direction of the Chairman Harry Goodson, decided their preference was for a scheme to evolve. They proposed for the time being to leave seating arrangements to individuals, with an emphasis on freedom to sit anywhere, but also with a strong plea not to indulge in big regular groupings. Chairman Harry is recorded as saying; "We are looking for the co-operation of all members over this. We will keep the mandate in cold storage for the time being – together with the reservation cards"

That the Misbourne Club has existed for over fifty years is a testament to the initiative of John Grimmer coupled with the myriad of Chairmen and committee members who have guided the Club through its many trials and tribulations. The manner in which the Club would operate was established in its formative year. That the formula has changed very little over time, coupled with a strong membership over the years, suggests it's a winning one.

Perhaps it is fitting to close with the words attributed to John Grimmer the Club's first Secretary. As a footnote to his first notice to Club members he wrote "I am sure that the formation of this Club is both desirable and necessary. There are lots of lonely retired people about, and if only we can help them, we shall not only be giving a service but enjoying ourselves at the same time." Long may the Club continue.