



Pro-Biz



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WALK AND PUB LUNCH – THE BELL, HAMPTON– 7th NOVEMBER 2023



Bright sunshine and blue skies made for a pleasant and invigorating environment for the November PROBUS walk which was this month on our doorstep, meeting at The Bell Inn public house Hampton.

Each month the number of walkers seems to increase with sixteen walkers setting off towards Bushy Park the second largest of London's royal parks after Richmond, entering the park via the gate opposite the Garrick Temple. A short stroll along a footpath and we then turned into Woodland Gardens where we followed the new recently laid paths leading us around the gardens to Fisher's Pond. A short pause here for the group to catch up and then out across Ash Walk into the second of the two gardens in the park where we followed the path around the edge of the gardens. After a stop for a comfort break, it was then out of the gate and into the open area of Bushy Park shortly crossing Chestnut Avenue passing both the Heron and Leg of Mutton ponds, through the bracken and then out onto Cobbler's Walk where we then made our way back towards Hampton Hill via Upper Lodge Road (a short stop was made to study what we believed was a kestrel looking for prey) and then back via Woodland Gardens, returning to The Bell Inn where we were joined by fourteen diners making a total of thirty sitting down for lunch, certainly the largest number in recent times.

Congratulations to the staff and chefs of The Bell who coped brilliantly with the unexpected number of people.



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Drawing on a long experience in this industry, our speaker Roger Ward managed to conduct a concise and fascinating tour of a fast-evolving service. Roger joined what was then Post Office Telecommunications (later BT) in 1971 as a graduate entrant and became a leader in network strategy. From an evocative collection of photographs, especially of rows of female operators manipulating plugs at lightning speed on huge early switchboards (no doubt many of our members can recall just such an image), he highlighted the limitations of these exchanges including snail-like connection speeds, wrong numbers, unreliability and tiny subscriber bases. Later developments led to enormous increases in capabilities; cable, 'wired' systems with shared lines, and American innovations in long-distance calls using copper cable by Bell and Edison (although, as Chris Oprey pointed out in his vote of thanks, Edison, in his photo looks seriously glum rather than radiating satisfaction with his technical progress). Onwards through cable, Auto Switching Systems, and the new uses of valves and amplifiers: by 1912 in the UK, subscriber levels had risen to some 500,000 plus subscribers, System X, AXE10, STDs, IDNs, (Integrated Digital Networks), and finally, Optical Fibres, offering long-distance, high-capacity service. The talk concluded with some pointed questions on the vulnerability of the undersea cables, efficiently addressed by Roger, to well-earned applause.

FUTURE EVENTS

Tuesday 19th December Club Christmas Luncheon, Fulwell Golf Club

Tuesday 16th January: Club Guest Luncheon, Fulwell Golf Club