

Newsletter December 2023

Christmas Meal at the Golden Cross

By Mike

Tuesday December 5th saw 66 of us enjoying our Christmas Bash at the Cross. Sadly Jane was unwell but my girlfriends, Julia and Gaynor came to the rescue and David Harrison became my partner for the evening entertaining me well, with more of his endless driving exploit stories and thoughts for the future. Jane and I had enjoyed time with Laura planning the event, whom kindly rearranged the lounge seating, which some commented, worked well. Other than 3 other diners, we had the Cross to ourselves - a big thanks to Laura and Felan for a great night of food and Prosecco. I presented flowers to Margy for her sterling work as leader of Team MGB and to Laura for hosting the Club meetings throughout the year.



Fiona created a quiz, which went to a tie-breaker and Graham entertained us with his latest song, performed separately in both the Bar and Lounge - a double gig he said. Julia Grice was in top form accompanying Graham on my washboard - this was so pleasing - she had beaten cancer and was clearly having proper fun once more. In fact Peter and Julia were the first to arrive at the Cross to start the partying!

Time pressure was such that the long awaited Bingo was postponed yet again, but watch this space. One of our lady members became unwell during the evening and visited hospital en route home; I'm pleased to report that she soon recovered and is in better health.

Overall the night seemed to go well. Therefore last but not least, thanks to all those who made the night such a success and particularly Jane for her preliminary work behind the scenes.

The various photos say a thousand words.



Norman Large a Personal Tribute by Paul

Norman & Chris started attending Club Nights about 10 years ago and they were always one's to arrive early and they would sit in a corner but no one would go and talk to them. Whenever I noticed this I would try and get those people involved but Norman's hearing was not so good and it was a struggle, so I would often sit and talk to them. This progressed to him bringing his camera and taking photos at the events, so when I was looking for someone to take over producing the Calendar, he stepped forward and resulted in me spending a happy morning or two sitting in front of his computer selecting photos to use, then giving a critique on the end result. At the end of the lockdown period I was struggling to do the Newsletters each month and Norman came forward but only on the condition that he was only an Editor. The first Newsletter was in January 2022 and what a job he did, so much more professional than my efforts but I always had to do the critique but he put up with my pedantic comments and quietly accepted the suggested changes, no matter how many times I sent the draft back for modification, indeed the Calendar for 2024 was up to draft 5! He was however quite a taskmaster and his messages always included "get this back to me as soon as possible" but then, nothing was ever too much trouble for him.

For me he was always a willing ear and ready to offer sensible advice and comments without interfering and often this was done at his house over one of his favourite Cappuccinos.

After our Grandchild Benjamin was born Norman started asking if we wanted the toys his Grandchildren had grown out of and we invariably said yes, what a collection of things he gave us, always with the proviso of "send me some photos of him playing with them", he loved to see those photos, well he loved his Grandchildren and he loved photos. The 'Thomas' train track he gave us is Benjamin's all time favourite toy, indeed the day we heard about Norman's passing he was sat at the breakfast table at our house with Thomas, Percy, Annie & Clarabel on the table in front of him, after having them in bed with him all night.

Each time I went round to Norman's house I would find out about another of his many skills, there were old black & white photos on the wall of him mountaineering, he used to be a good cyclist, he & Chris were British Champion Ballroom Dancers (only stopping when the knees gave up) but became the official photographer for the Competitions. He had started to teach his Granddaughter to play the Violin (which means he could play), so during the 'Clap for the NHS' he resurrected his side drum and celebrated with that. All through his life he was involved in collecting for charities and had been a senior member of the Round Table. He just loved helping other people (do you remember the time at the Club Weekend away when one of the lads broke their little finger and as Norman had not been drinking, like the rest of us, he quickly volunteered to drive him the 40 miles to the nearest Hospital and wait until he was ready to return, refusing any payment), however he was very self sufficient, so rarely needed help from others, which is how I found out he was so ill. For quite some months he had been leaving early from the Club Nights as he was having difficulty sitting comfortably for very long but we didn't think too much of it (he never complained) but one day I received a call from Chris, was I free to come round, Norman was having trouble getting up the stairs, he had put a chairlift in place but it needed to be screwed down and could I screw it to the stairs, which I gladly did, although still under his supervision!!



This helping others was most demonstrated in the cheque presentation he organised at Studley Castle, to help promote awareness of Osteosarcoma by doing a photoshoot with representatives of Sarcoma UK. He was not well that day but insisted on driving his beloved MGB, affectionately named FAV, to be in the centre of the photo, he should have gone home afterwards (he had been given 2 days of Chemo only two days before) but insisted on joining us all inside for coffee, so our last view of him was driving away from Studley Castle with the Ladies in his life (Daughter Claire and Wife Chris), riding shotgun one Mini in front and one Mini behind, waving as he went.

This photo is of Norman in FAV on the last Arden MG Club event he attended at the Wheatsheaf in Badsey for the Octoberfest Run, he didn't do the run but came for the meal. He always took a photo of FAV whenever he went out, so I took a photo for him to be sure he had one that day.

One of my last visits to his house and how I would like to remember him, was to take Benjamin to meet him at last and see Norman's tremendous train layout in the office, the two of them had a great time. Benjamin's favourite engines are The Flying Scotman and Mallard and both were on the tracks ready and waiting for Benjamin to see them. It is difficult to know who enjoyed that visit the most but I suspect it was Norman, I'm glad I took a video of them, the smile on his face was enormous. Again on the day we heard of Norman's passing I was entertaining Benjamin in the car on the way home showing him videos of Trains and by chance the video of the trains at Norman's house came up and when it had finished Benjamin piped up can we go to see Norman again? How do you tell a 4 year old.....

Norman you will be greatly missed.
Rest in Peace.

This is Norman's MG Story which was published in an earlier Newsletter:

Norman & Christine's

1965 MGB Roadster - FAV 117C

Why!

Shortly before reaching retirement age (65 Yrs) in May of 2013 I made a comment to Chris (Christine) that as a young man I had always dreamed of owning an MGB. That said we were soon out looking for one to give me something to do during my retirement. Having tried a few we came across our present 'B' at a garage in Cannock. The proprietor was selling it on behalf of a third party (believed to be the widow(er) of the owner). We both fell in love with it and made an offer, subject of course to a few things - new disks, pads, spline hubs, bearings, rear suitcase rack, rear axle service, full vehicle service, MOT, etc. Once agreement was reached we had a wait of a couple of weeks for the work to be carried out. We got the car home shortly before my birthday - what a wonderful present from Chris. Just one downside, I still haven't retired! having a couple of clients that will not let me go - hey-ho!

Since purchase I have just about found time to re-pad the seats, re-rubber the quarterlights, fit new wheels and tyres, fit new rear springs, fit new SS exhaust and fix/improve many other bits and bobs not least the new spot lights. All done in keeping with the original specification where possible.



FAV in garage prior to purchase

Vehicle History

Our MGB Roadster was built in Abingdon, UK, in December 1965 and exported to the USA. It's history in, what is believed to have been, a "Dry State" of the US is not known but it returned home to the UK in 1998 where it was fully restored. It has had three owners since then (2 plus us), the first two keeping the car garaged with very little use. Hence, since its restoration it has travelled less than 10,000 miles - dry use only.

Purchased by us in April 2013, it has undergone major servicing and maintenance works to bring it back to its original specification and condition. The Roadster, affectionately know as 'Fav', is used whenever possible in dry conditions.

Chairman's Chatter - Reminiscing about Norman:

2023 has been a year of big ups and downs here at The Hollow, with the news of Norman's ill health and his battle to the end, a huge "down".

Whilst I can't remember my first meeting with Norman and Christine, Jane recalls a long conversation with Christine at The Limes Country Lodge, Earlswood, after the 2016 March Madness run.

At future events, Norman and his camera were rarely parted and we all have photos to treasure, masterfully taken through his various lenses. In 2017, a bunch of us enjoyed the first, in more recent times, Club holiday break at St Audrey's Bay, followed by a second visit. At the first, we invited ourselves / gate crashed a structured professional dance class. Luckily through their reputation as award

winning former ballroom dance champions, Norman was able to sweet talk the class organiser, whom he thankfully knew and we not only escaped being sent off, but progressively took control.

At St Audries 2018, I slipped spectacularly on the very muddy beach and was hosed down by Jane to everyone's amusement. Early the same evening Clive and Beverley had been walking along the beach and he too fell and in the process broke his finger. At that time of the day, Norman whom seemed to be the most sober of us all, kindly volunteered his ambulance services and they both raced off in FAV to Taunton hospital, returning much later, just in time for last orders.

With Norman and Christine fairly close neighbours to our Events Secretary then Team Cleobury, Alan and Julia invited them to the periodic social meetings of the Club "Elders". As a result, Norman and Christine were soon fully integrated into Club matters, by which time he had become the Official Photographer and with FAV always looking so immaculate.

In 2022, if not before, Norman took the lead responsibility for the Club's newsletter and promoted it up a league using his Marketing background and computer wizardry.

At that time I felt encouraged to write a monthly report about my "Ton Up" activities. It was during this time that I got to know Norman much better and his interest encouraged me to get to the finish line with his barometer keeping score. I looked forward to our chats, when I was asked to proof his work on my waffle and the way he was able to skilfully present it all.

When I became Chair in March 2023, he continued to encourage and support me, at a time when his aches and pains were, unknown to us all, becoming uncomfortable. As the weeks progressed and knowing of their national dancing achievements over the decades, I sensed a hip transplant might be on the radar for Norman.

As we all now know, it was Osteosarcoma that was causing Norman distress and sadly a fight he could not win. "Hey-Ho," he would say.

During May, I was in a dialogue with Margy in particular, about the Breast Cancer donation of £500 from surplus funds at 31.12.22. With the Charity chosen by our ladies being Breast Cancer Now, I researched them to find that August was nominated nationally for their



“Cream Tea” fundraising events. To cut a long story short, Denise organised a splendid Cream Tea for our ladies and the Chairman’s Charity Picnic idea emerged, as a way to generate £500 for the Prostate Cancer Charity, to balance up donations to both sexes so to speak.

The success of the Picnic has been well documented and took place at the end of August with Norman and Christine attending and moreover, on the surface Norman seemingly in comparatively good form. Our Club 2024 Calendar - February, captures Norman so bravely finding some enjoyment with us all. I for one, will be framing February and it will be hung in my hall of fame with other lost friends.

With Team MGB (Margy’s Boys and Girls) organising the Picnic at a pace and with Cancer Charities at the heart of our fundraising, there would be a number of fine causes to consider after the Event. Some £1500 was raised by the end of August and with £500 earmarked for Prostate Cancer. I knew there would be support to consider a donation to Sarcoma, amongst other Cancer Charities. It was my personal view, that without doubt, Sarcoma should also be sent £500 and to help overall, I was able to secure a further donation of £500 from a Company contact - job done, total now £2000 plus to extend our donations . On Wednesday 4th

October I was delighted to mail Norman, to advise him that there had been overwhelming Club support to donate £500 to a Sarcoma charity of his choice. He too was overwhelmed when we later spoke.

Following research done by Christine and my Due Diligence, I sent £500 to Sarcoma UK, without delay. Norman and I spoke and I floated the thought of a cheque handover photo opportunity with Sarcoma, even in the most unlikely extent, that I would trailer FAV down to Sarcoma in London - or



A Chocolate Santa from Santa

just whatever it might take, to get the job done without delay. What followed was a military style operation under Norman’s 24/7 command and with Paul as his right hand man. The presentation was made quite appropriately at Studley Castle on Thursday November 9th, with photography by Norman’s finest lady student, his loving daughter Claire [Ed; the only time she had been allowed to take the photos].

Some of you may not know that earlier in the week on Tuesday and Wednesday, Norman had endured 2 Chemotherapy treatments. On Thursday morning and feeling most unwell, but in true Norman style, he dug very deep to drive FAV to the photoshoot. You’ll all know that Norman was from the north and made of the right stuff, even so it was an heroic effort . He had already penned Press Releases for the MG Clubs, Local Press and moreover Sarcoma UK, whom were represented at Studley Castle by Christine and Steve Rhodes. Sadly they lost their daughter to Sarcoma, aged 29. I had the privilege of picking them up from Redditch station and the opportunity to exchange stories and share just how admired Norman and Christine were within the Club.

The Warners manager, Joanne Hammick, made us most welcome and we later enjoyed a welcome coffee and cake in the main bar lounge. Despite not intending to stay long, Norman held court and before finally leaving spent time with Christine, Steve and me to express his thanks and appreciation to them both and to his friends at AMGC.



Sarcoma UK Presentation Studley Castle

With Christine and Claire each driving their lovely big black Minis, they set off home along the long driveway with Norman, open top of course, sandwiched in by his ladies. With one big final wave to us all, he was en route home to rest and reflect on his amazing achievement. I will treasure this, my last moment with Norman, forever.



Last sight of Norman driving away from Studley Castle

I left just after, en route to Redditch station and had expected to easily catch up the Large Convoy. I failed, they had disappeared at quite an amazing rate of knots, to beat the threatening rain. The following days were tough for Norman and despite his resolve and loving care, until a cure can be found, there would be only one outcome.

On a final and more positive note, within a few days of receiving our donation, I was awakened by the 7am Radio 4 news, to learn that Sarcoma UK had announced that their research teams had developed an "AI" application to detect early stage Sarcoma. So clever was the application, that it could be applied for other Cancer detections. Our donation could make a difference.

I shared the news and link with Norman and he was absolutely delighted when we spoke, again characteristically thinking of others first.

Norman's funeral followed on Friday 15 December and this will be covered in next Month's Newsletter.

Norman was particularly special to Jane and me, we would have just loved Christine and him as neighbours.

In memory, my father was also named Norman. He beat Cancer once but lost second time around. In the interval in the 1980's, he Co-Founded the Solihull Cancer Support Club with his friend Ruby.

Until Ed the Zed arrived, we had never really named any of our cars. In memory of both Normans, our Discovery 4 is now named "Norman" - it is of course both Green and Large.....

So thank you Norman for being such a true friend to us all and together with Graham and Paul, for creating an amazing library of photos, for us to remember and treasure the endless joyous times we all spent together.

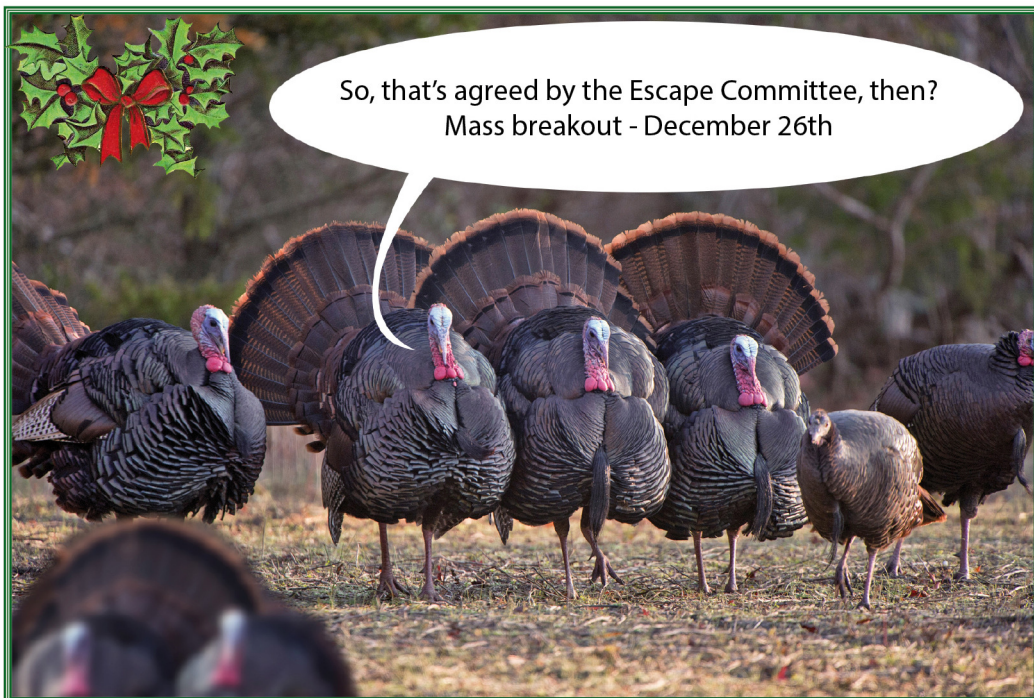
"Hey Ho" and cheerio Norman.

Ed's note Following the Funeral, Donations can be made to www.sarcoma.co.uk in Norman's memory.

Greetings from the Chairman:

So seasons greetings from Jane and I and we look forward to seeing you all in the New Year, over the hill and around the bend. In the meantime I'll be enjoying yet another birthday - and well beyond my retirement age.

Graham's Humour Page



The Shakespeare Hospice Donation.

By David Rayner

A cheque for £500, being the final tranche of the cancer charity money, was presented to The Shakespeare Hospice on Thursday 23rd November. The weather forecast was overcast but no rain, and with the Hospice being a little tight for room, 20 minutes was spent positioning the cars for the photo shoot.

Receiving the cheque on behalf of the Hospice was Alison Stone & Charlie Hattersley, with photos taken by Sam Conway, after introductions and getting ourselves in front of the cars, just as Sam started to shoot, the sun came out directly at us, just like a spot light, a perfect set up for a worthwhile course.

The Shakespeare Hospice does tremendous work in our community, for all ages, for those affected with life limiting illness, also supporting their families. 90% of their funding comes from charitable donations like ours, more information about their services can be found on their website, or if anyone would like to be a volunteer.



Breakfast Meeting Report

by Paul



As you can see in the photo we were relegated to the Cafe for this Month's Meeting but that was no problem even with the highest number for the turn-out of 21 people. The December meeting was of course the Festive Lunch and it was decided that there would not be another meeting (on the 19th) but we will be back again on 16th January, so I look forward to seeing you all again.

Skittles Evening - Report

By Paul



Waiting for the food, Binton Social Club



A Master Class by Lisa

What a surprise we had on arrival at the Binton Social Club for our Skittles evening, for a start it wasn't freezing like last year but the 'Alley' had been laid out but the other way round, they had realised that the window was in danger, although I did insist they take down the photo hung just above the skittles.

We were first there but everyone else was soon filling the room and play got underway, with

the usual format of Boys vs Girls. Play progressed well and we managed to squeeze in 3 rounds before the meal was served and everyone sat down to enjoy their basket meals, not to mention the plate fulls of bread & butter



The Food Arrives

and the extra chips! The Girls just edged ahead in the first round greatly assisted by the expert bowling of Lisa to score the first Strike and she scored another in the next Round, however



This is how you do it

the Boys pulled back in the second round and romped ahead in the third for a decisive victory overall.

As we were in good time I decided to have the full 3 'Lives' for everyone in the game of Killer and it became more and more tense as the field was whittled down to the last 2 players but Lech held his nerve and fought off the challenge of David and took home the box of chocs. The individual prize winners were clearly ahead of the rest having scored Strikes in the 'Rounds', so Lisa & David went home with the bottles of wine. Of course we need to award the Wooden Spoon (Denise was keen to pass it on) and I was thinking maybe I could award it to the first person to loose all three lives in Killer, rather than the lowest score but Fiona made the decision easier for me as she managed to achieve both!! Well done to the prize winners and a special mention for our helpers on the night, Lech & Mike J, spent the whole evening sat by the skittles ready to re-stack them, so you would have thought Mike would not be intent on putting Lech out of action nearly breaking his leg with one of his bowls (it didn't stop Lech carrying on to win the game of killer), many thanks to both of them.



Thanks to the 'Skittle Boys' Lech & Mike



The Winners: Lisa & David



Lech Triumphed in 'Killer'



Someone has to take the 'Wooden Spoon' Home

What's On:

Chilly Willy Run - 1st January 2024

Chilly Willy start and finish point, The View, Wootton Waven 10.30am for a 11.00am Le Mans start. Lunch is a Brunch to be ordered before we leave for the 33 mile wander about to Feckenham and back.

David Pitt has thankfully generated the run and we've both driven it. Jane and I plan to drive it on 31.12, to be sure as they say. Please book with Mike (mikegreenkbs@aol.com)

In terms of the winter weather issues, it'll be obvious and if necessary a last minute decision on 31.12. If in doubt please call me: 07542 990690 (David Pitt: 07956 604384 Jane: 07976 373336)

Club Nights:

Tuesday 2nd January 2024 - At the Golden Cross

Please Note **NO FOOD** will be available for this evening.

Whilst the Cross is closed, Laura will open for us and offered to arrange for the return of The Fish and Chip van, which I declined given the uncertain numbers and the Christmas Festivities weight excesses.

Running order: Members Brief Talks:

1. I'll start with 2 true stories of "Never knowing who you might bump into". 2. Cars I wished I'd never sold / written off or Cars I wished I'd never bought, or both. 3. Or just something interesting.

Formalities:

1. 2023 review and highlights 2. Flash year end Bank Balance position 3 Keep sharpening the saw - Members thoughts for 2024/25. Key objectives. Discussions to guide our new Chair. 4. Raffle income discussion. 5. 2024 Events planner. 6. Speakers Corner. 7. Newsletter discussion. 8. MMMG. 9. March AGM Preliminaries - The next Chair etc. 10. AIB - Any Interesting Business Secretary Reports.

Warners 2024 update and payments.

Tuesday 6th February 2024 - At the Golden Cross

We have Patrick Fitzgerald coming back to give us a talk on an 'Unsung Hero' with tales of an Antarctic Exploration, see flyer at the end of this Newsletter.

Tuesday 5th March 2024 - At the Golden Cross

This evening will be our AGM and as you all will know by now Mike will have completed his stint as Chairman and will be handing over the reins.

Breakfast Meetings at BMM, Gaydon:

All meetings at the British Motor Museum in Gaydon, on the third Tuesday of the Month. The Museum opens at 10am and we aim to sit down, usually on the Gallery, otherwise in the Junction 12 Cafe. If you have not got a 12 month ticket be sure to tick the box to convert your booking to an Annual Membership. It is lower cost and quicker at the entrance if you pre-book online.

Tuesday 16th January 2024

Tuesday 20th February 2024 - Please note we will not be able to use the Gallery this month.

Tuesday 19th March 2024

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year

ANTARCTIC EXPLORATION

‘An Unsung Hero’

Speaker - Patrick Fitzgerald

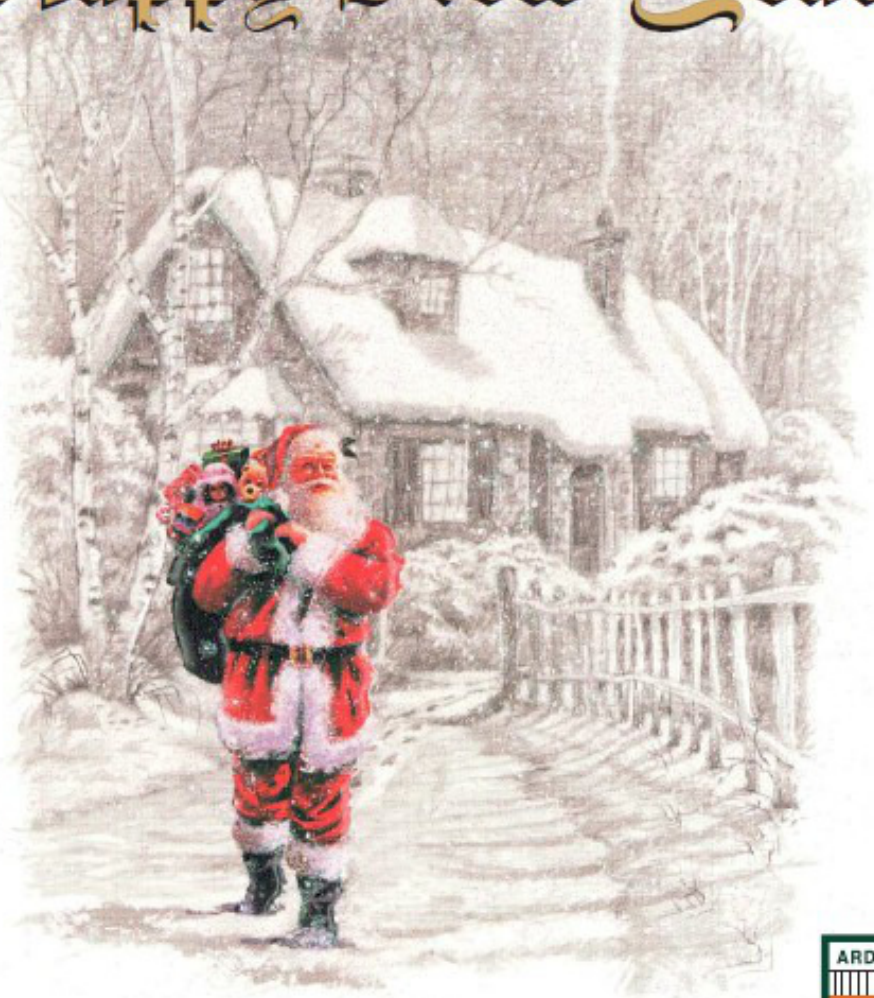
The story and tribute to a modest uneducated Irishman, who travelled more miles in Antarctica than either Scott or Shackleton. However without his contribution of strength, of character and fortitude; both the Scott & Shackleton major expeditions would have ended in even more dire straits.



Patrick, completed an extended General Apprenticeship (Aged 16 -24) at Automotive Products (L/Spa) and gained CEng status. However he then joined the Royal Air Force as a pilot and spent 24 years as a tactical transport pilot / instructor / examiner on the Lockheed C130K Hercules, Scottish Aviation Bulldog, HS748 (Andover) and Lockheed L1011 Tristar, all without a ‘ground tour’.

His Irish heritage led him to discover today’s topic and led him to learn so much more about the difficulties of Antarctic exploration.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



Keep Happy Keep Healthy Keep MGing

