

Grumpy Old Men 2020

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January 2020

Our January meeting followed the normal pattern of a bite to eat and liquid refreshment before tackling the issues of the day. The first item on the agenda was the difficulty in **parking at our hospitals**, particularly at QMC where the failed multi-storey car park has never been replaced. It was suggested that access to the site by tram was meant to alleviate the necessity for parking but there seems to be little evidence of it.

We continue to be concerned by the way our **contributions to the revenue** of the country are being spent, Senior MP's and Human Rights groups have condemned the use of the foreign aid budget to support some of the world's most brutal and repressive regimes, the governments of China, North Korea, Argentina, Cuba, Venezuela and Kyrgistan have all benefited.

Also, some state-funded **QUANGO chiefs** are receiving six figure salaries to lecture on losing weight or getting a flu jab. Apparently 356 public health staff each received in excess of £100,000 in the past tax year.

Another example of public money wasted is the purchase by police forces of 448 **electric cars** (in order to satisfy green targets) which they admit are useless for chasing suspects or rushing to the aid of victims of crime.

Once again we heard of evidence that **Smart Motorways** can be dangerous places, It's encouraging to hear that an review of their roll-out has been undertaken. Someone in authority must have been listening to us!

After all that moaning it was a pleasure to hear the tale of the **survival of a cat** that climbed under the bonnet of a parked car and was accidentally taken on a 130 mile journey. So, the mildly traumatised tortoiseshell survived an incident that could have been CATastrophic,,,(a further 20 cat puns ensued).

And finally, we discussed **Vimto**. (Do you remember it?) I was unaware that it still existed, but apparently it is very popular in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, especially during Ramadan. However, profits could be hit by a new soft drinks levy of up to 50% and the manufacturers have issued a profit warning. Currently the market is worth £7M annually.

February 2020

Lots of things to raise the hackles this month, some old, some new. We're keeping a watchful eye on the **smart motorway** story and this month we hear that some lorry rescue services will not deal with a breakdown until the access has been made safe by police. Also it seems that the automatic system meant to detect a stopped vehicle is only 90% effective, and so far only installed on a small section of the national smart motorways. We wonder how the review is progressing

Meanwhile, **electric scooters** are becoming popular and seem to be used on either the roads or pavements by choice. Some of these can do 30mph, definitely not for pavement use and illegal to use on the highway. The Department of Transport has belatedly woken up to the situation and is considering treating them like electric bicycles - limiting speeds to 16mph, banning them from pavements and allowing them on the roads if fitted with lights and reflectors. Watch this space.

We read that to achieve net zero **carbon emissions** by 2050 we need to replace all gas home heating systems with heat pumps, and put 10,000,000 electric cars on the roads. We can't quite work out where all the carbon-free energy to drive these pumps and recharge these cars is going to come from. It's not likely to be nuclear.

A couple of possible **denials of justice** were discussed, A police driving instructor drove at up to 122mph through red lights on a private visit to his son's college. He was cleared of 16 motoring offences when he claimed that he was "carrying out a self assessment of his driving skills" which exempted him from traffic rules. Taking the PC surely?

Also a **disgraced surgeon** has gone to jail for carrying out unnecessary surgery, and has to pay back his legal aid. Hooray!

But, the boss of the NHS trust that tried to cover up this scandal was able to quit with a £2.7m pension pot and within two years is working for the NHS again. Boooh!

That's enough for this month, so we leave you with this thought, courtesy of our Illustrious convenor..

If at first you don't succeed - then skydiving's not for you!

August 2020

The Grumpys are now regularly meeting twice a month thanks to ZOOM and are finally getting quite good at not all talking at the same time. Fed with suggestions for comment by our convenor Ian, and with contributions from the floor we can usually find enough to laugh at, despair at or be incredulous about during a two hour session, (mostly laugh)

Subjects encountered in the past month include **concern for pensioners** who will find it hard to afford a television licence and how non-payment activists could clog up the courts if prosecuted.

Silver Surfers, on the other hand, that use the internet regularly are apparently less lonely and have higher levels of overall life satisfaction.

We had a long and rambling discussion comparing **our schooldays**, particularly in relation to sadistic teachers and their choices of weapon for punishment. We also discussed the 11 plus exam and the provision in some areas of Technical Grammar schools as well as Grammar and Secondary Modern. Seems your education was a post code lottery then as now.

Several topics are regular items and misuse of taxpayer's money never fails to appear, In this month we wondered about **UK foreign aid** being sent to wealthy nations, and the government spending large amounts on consultancy.

I wonder what we'll be talking about next time? Whatever it is I'm sure we can end up laughing!

September 2020

The cheerfully grumpy contingent met twice in September thanks to the miracle of Zoom (and thanks for all the help, Paul) and spent a happy few hours dissecting the news both good and bad.

Amongst items on the good side we covered:

- The last night of the Proms, with singing of Land of Hope and Glory getting a late reprieve.
- The commencement of digging work after 3160 days on the HS2 project, a good thing to stimulate the economy ! (see also below)
- Drivers to escape a fine for a first offence of using a bus lane incorrectly.
- The first all-electric charging service station has opened in Essex - no petrol pumps. The shape of things to come?

Oh, that's all !

On the bad side:

The commencement of digging work after 3160 days on the HS2 project, a bad thing and a total waste of money ! (see also above)

- MOD advises that some body armour issued in the past was flawed and not to be relied on. Tests were ignored for decades.
- Our wonderful Transport Secretary (is he on the Grumpy's bus?) is planning a £70 fine for motorists who park on pavements. Goodbye to refuse collection and emergency vehicle access on many of our streets.
- The asylum system is said to be costing the taxpayer a billion pounds a year and is ineffective
- Two people have been arrested for a £70,000 furlough fraud. How much has the system been abused overall?

And plenty enough other bad news stories to keep us busy till it was time to stop.

Finally we were heartened by a survey that suggested that in terms of optimism, once past the low point at 58, those in their '70s are reasonably optimistic on the whole.

It could be worse !

October 2020

Who would have thought it could get worse, but this virus has added to the Grumpiness of this group as we discuss the Government's actions or inactions on this issue. The Grumpies can no longer meet on a Friday lunch over drinks and a sausage cob at the Willowbrook, as we now must tackle the complications of Zoom meetings.

Some members are more adept than others. Ian tries to steer the meetings with a collection of recent newspaper cuttings, but this is a task far harder than herding cats.

In the two meetings in October the first topic has been the virus – we are against it. We are, of course, armchair experts on this [and all other subjects].

Another regular topic is immigration and in particular illegal entry from safe countries, plus the failure to remove those who should be removed and the appropriate treatment for genuine refugees.

Lawyers and Judges come in for criticism too [though one Grumpy attempted to explain their roles – after declaring an interest].

Universally we are against "Safe Motorway" schemes – and note the news items on increased accidents – we told you so". Government expenditure of our taxes on public relations, accountants, management consultants' lawyers, fashionable retraining, etc were noted from numerous newspaper articles....and, as you may have guessed, we found much to Grump about.

An exception to our critic of all politicians appears in the form of Jacinda Arden, the Labour Party leader and Prime Minister of New Zealand who can successfully deal with earthquakes, terrorist attacks, a pandemic, lead a Government and fight a General Election whilst giving birth and rearing her children. Stay Alert.

David Colyer.

November 2020

Our meetings this month, once we'd settled down and most of the banter was out of the way, seemed mostly to be discussions about conspicuous spending of other people's money. For instance, despite its case for being underfunded the BBC lavished £25million on golden goodbyes to scores of senior managers, up by a third on previous years. Such awards have now been capped at a mere £95K apiece.

Then there is the story of a cash-strapped local council spending its money on portraits of their members, the quality of the results was heavily criticised. I wonder if the current members of Nottingham City Council will be similarly immortalised?

And so it goes on (allegedly):

- £250K spent on the issue of free doggy poop bags
- Every £5K spent on new cycle schemes only 1 extra cyclist is attracted to use it (I find that hard to believe)
- The MOD spends £83M on school fees for children of its personnel.

We ended up discussing the yellow electric scooters that appear to have been abandoned around the area, and hope that they're collected regularly and used sensibly (on the road only!) by those that hire them.

For some reason the talk then turned to shopping trolleys and how uncontrollable and self-willed they seem to be. There must be an expertise in using them that could be taught, something like the old cycling proficiency scheme?.

Final tip for the week, if the Christmas booze runs out, don't drink the hand sanitizer! It's poisonous!

December 2020

The conversation ranged far and wide during our December meetings with several varied topics suggested for discussion. One of these as follows:-

Whilst most of the conspiracy theories are patently insane there do seem to be far too many coincidences here for it to be pure chance!

The Chinese biological laboratory in Wuhan is owned by Glaxo.

Who, by chance, own Pfizer (the one who produces the vaccine)

Which, by chance, is managed by Black Rock finances.

Who, by chance, manage the finances of the Open Foundation Company (SOROS FOUNDATION)!

Which, by chance, serves the French AXA!

Which, coincidentally, owns the German company Winterthur.

Which, by chance, built the Chinese laboratory in Wuhan!

Which was accidentally bought by the German Allianz.

Which, incidentally, has Vanguard as a shareholder.

Which is a shareholder of Black Rock.

Which controls the central banks and manages about ONE THIRD of the global investment capital.

Which, incidentally, is a major shareholder of MICROSOFT

The property of BILL GATES, who happens to be a shareholder of PFIZER (which sells the miracle VACCINE) and is currently the first sponsor of WHO !!! — YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP!

Also discussed were several items on the general theme of transport and pollution:-

The scrapping of a low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) scheme in Wandsworth led to an unexpected DECREASE in levels of nitrogen dioxide,

Councils have been accused of hypocrisy for letting their CCTV vehicles park with the engine running while enforcing LTN schemes.

A report by Emissions Analytics states that plug-in hybrid cars are worse for the environment than drivers are being led to believe, with some spewing out twelve times their claimed CO2 emissions.

Good news that Paula Vennels (disgraced former post office supremo who presided over the Horizon accounting scandal) has now also lost her £55K role as NHS trust executive and her non-exec position at Dunelm and Morrison's boards.

And finally, it should come as no surprise to know that Sir David Attenborough has been the winner in a poll for Britain's best voice.

Keep Smiling!