



**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at 1000hrs**  
The Lion Hotel

## Minutes

- **Introduction**

Helen, Pam, Marilyn and Phil sent their apologies.

- **Discussion Topics**

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

**What are the pressures on us today?**

- First, we decided to categorise the 'us' in the question and to begin with, thought of 'us' as humanity in general.
- The fact that we have to think globally when considering the world's climate and the fact that we are responsible for a large part of global warming is a huge pressure. Also the fact that because of ever-easier travel and communications, we are a global economy is also a huge pressure. The latter subject is very pertinent at the moment because of the disastrous state of the Greek economy and the effect of that on the rest of the EU. By refusing the terms of support for their banks because of the austerity they have suffered already, it may well be that our banks here in the UK will suffer and not be able to lend at affordable rates, then our property market may crash. However, if this means lower house prices then it may well be a good thing.
- These considerations brought us to concentrate on pressures in the UK. Never mind the Greeks, we have certainly suffered austerity here and the results are more and more pressures on the 30s-40s generation and even more, the twenties, who enter the world of work already burdened with debts from their education, not able to save the big deposits demanded for mortgages and knowing they will probably never have a safe job for life, may have to rely on part-time work plus benefits and may never retire completely because they will not have a sufficient pension fund.
- In fact, we pensioners make things worse because of what we cost the country in pensions, medical care, free bus transport etc. Nor can the government threaten to deprive us of these privileges because we are a huge proportion of the vote.

- How to remedy the situation? The worse-case scenario would be a revolution, although it was felt that it might happen in a country like Greece it would be very unlikely in the UK. However, it was pointed out that maybe we didn't realise it but in the economic crisis of 2008, we were hours away from total economic collapse.
- Pressures on us, the retired generation in the UK, were largely attributed to the world of IT, because of the rate of advance which never stops. So we are left behind (60 % of pensioners do not know how to email) in a world which withdraws its personal services more and more. There is no tax office any more in Shrewsbury and this is indicative of all the services where you have to struggle with the procedures to make any sort of contact. We are told that we have the 'freedom' to choose our energy or telephone/internet provider, yet the pricing structures are so complicated it becomes a huge pressure trying to decipher them. Even in the volunteering sector where we OAPS are dominant, managers introduce ever more complicated IT systems that it may begin to put volunteers off.

As a final thought, there is too much pressure on us from 'cold-calls' whether it be to sell us something or to ask us to give to charity or to tempt us to make spurious claims of money.

### **Can you express yourself with emoticons?**

- Strictly speaking, we began with in-words and acronyms like LOL and remarked on the differing jargon of different age-groups/professions with which we advertise the group or 'tribe' we wish to be part of, but emoticons are pictures – and simplistic ones as that.
- On their own, emoticons do nothing but take us back to the stone-age – in fact the stone-age drawings are more interesting. However, members began to quote instances of e-mails being misunderstood, especially where the recipient has taken offence at something which was meant to be light-hearted. This is where the emoticon at the end of the sentence can help indicate the mood or intention of the writer. So emoticons alone we concluded, are childish, but used with the written word can elaborate on the meaning.

### **Why is Society becoming more secular?**

- As usual we began with defining the question. Secularity is the non-reliance on a religious being. It doesn't mean non-spiritual; non-religious people can have a sense of the spirituality of the universe.
- So, is society becoming more secular? Well, in the 60s, sociologists were writing in agreement that more and more people in the western world (probably more in the UK than in the US!) were non-religious and that this trend would continue. But has it? It is true that attendance at Christian churches has diminished over the years, but there has also been an increase in other 'new-age' spiritual beliefs, or even beliefs personally crafted to suit the individual.
- With the increase in immigration to the UK there has been an increase in non-Christian adherents, amongst whom there seems to be little diminution of their beliefs in the younger generations.

- If there is a reduction in church attendance, it may be due, in large part, to the modern distrust/dislike of organised religion of the sort which dictates how their congregation should behave out in the world: how they should vote/dress/spend their money etc.
  - Society, as ruled by the government, should certainly be secular, everyone agreed. Religion should be private and personal and have no place in schools or government or any other public bodies. The French were admired for their separation of church and state and members wished the government would do away with faith schools here in the UK.
- Future Discussion Topics
    - Does a god have to be all-powerful?
    - What are the ethics of holidaying abroad?

Please bring along any other topical subject that appeals to you.

- Date of Next Meeting  
The next meeting will be held on **Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August at 1000hrs** at The Lion Hotel.

