



Monday 6th June
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

o Introduction

Marilyn, Pam and Margaret Turner sent their apologies. Thirteen members were present.

Tea and coffee collection was reduced to £1.50 as there is always some money left over (which we give to the bar staff who make our drinks).

o Discussion Topics

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

What constitutes good manners?

- o Viv Shilston kicked off the subject wanting to know if she was alone in thinking the young don't follow the old rules. Most people agreed, citing examples of mobile phone intrusions in conversations – even at mealtimes. Mike commented that the older generation always say the younger ones are lacking in manners, but was it true? We all agreed it couldn't be true otherwise we would be down with the lowest form of animal life by now.
- o So what is 'good manners'? It was quickly defined as 'making others feel comfortable'. Viv Barker gave an example of being invited to dinner at a neighbour's house and being asked to remove her shoes before stepping inside onto the new oak floor. This divided the group – some thinking it was reasonable to ask that visitors (as well as family) do not dirty or scratch their floor, whilst others thought it rather insulting to visitors. Viv asked if it would be all right to ask a visiting royal to remove their shoes.
- o Manners are more important than etiquette, which, Phil said, was a set of rules set up to divide society into different classes. Nobody had an argument to the contrary.
- o It was concluded that each generation adjusted and established their own rules; for example, there is a code of behaviour online nowadays called 'Netiquette' which most of us 'oldies' haven't heard of.

Should the statue of Clive be removed?

- This subject is a spin-off from the recent demands of students at Brasenose College, Oxford, to remove the statue of Rhodes on the grounds that Rhodes did untold harm to peoples in the name of the British Empire. Here in Shrewsbury we have a similar situation with Clive of India, traditionally revered as a local hero but who, as Ken informed us, looted huge amounts of money from the Indian people and caused a famine in which thousands died.
- How should we judge characters from the past? It would seem that most prominent figures were not faultless – even Churchill was a war-monger, cheated on paying taxes and was greedily ambitious. If we are going to destroy statues of people who did bad things, we would have none left.
- Harold said the best approach is to leave the past well alone and to concentrate on the wrong-doings happening right now and be more careful about who we build statues to in the future. Right now, the five richest countries in the UN are also the biggest sellers of military weapons. So, whilst those countries sit around the table discussing how to deal with terrorism and war erupting in the Middle East and Africa, those same countries are allowing their companies to sell weapons to them. In Somalia, it is cheaper to buy a Kalashnikov rifle than to buy fresh water.
- We must leave those statues in order to be prompted to discuss them. In this way, the subject is linked to the idea of the freedom of speech. It is counter to the idea of being able to express any ideas you like in a democracy and that it is regressive to ban people and subjects from debate out of political correctness.

Should parents be fined for taking their children out of school for holidays?

- Certainly there was no problem in our day when holidays abroad were rare and holidays were communal – practically everyone stopping work on the same two weeks in the year even if factories and shops closed for the duration. Nowadays, travel companies cash in on the school holiday periods by increasing their prices exponentially.
- Back in the day, the headteacher had the final word and usually would agree to a term time absence if it was reasonable, but now the government talk of introducing fines for parents who take their children out of school in term time. In a recent case, a child went out of school for two holidays; one with his father and one with his mother, which is not unusual. The cult of individualism has taken over so each family makes its own rules now, but is this OK?
- On the other hand, what about taking children out of school altogether, in order to educate the child at home? Apparently, it is quite easy to do this and without much supervision either.
- Most interestingly, some members even remembered the time when agricultural families took their children out of school all through the harvest-time when their labour was needed on the farm. In fact, that is the very reason the six weeks' summer holidays were instituted in schools.

- Finally, the group did not feel too strongly about this, and could see both sides of the argument, but if parents do take their children out of school, they should not expect the teacher to prepare work for the child to do. It is important that important the missing work is caught-up as Sue could verify – her daughter never caught up with a two-week gap from school and that affected her future grades.

Should that gorilla have been shot dead?

- This topic came from the recent news item about a zoo in Cincinnati where a three-year-old boy fell into a gorilla enclosure. The 32-stone gorilla started dragging the boy around the enclosure for at least ten minutes before the guard came and shot the gorilla dead.
- Animal activists felt that it wasn't necessary to kill the gorilla, but the guard said that if he had used a stun dart, it would have taken ten minutes before it knocked the gorilla unconscious, by which time the 32 stone gorilla could easily have killed the boy, either by intention or by accident.
- There have been vicious comments online from people who thought the parent of the child was at fault. Our group thought that the zoo needed to increase the security of the surrounding metal fence, but otherwise the guard was overwhelmingly thought to have taken the right decision.

Are public toilets a human right?

- Apparently, over the last ten years, 1,782 public toilets have been closed. Newcastle for example, have no public toilets now and Manchester has just one. Where there are public toilets, there is no charge nowadays, and no doubt the absence of public toilets has to do with cutting expenditure and preventing indecent behaviour.
- It was remarked that there are no public toilets in the Frankwell area in town and we could only think of two in the centre. One building with public toilets is quite new but offers only one toilet for women, one for men and one for the disabled – despite the building being a huge concrete blight on the surrounding 17th century buildings.
- However, there are so many cafes, coffee-shops and restaurants in town that the lack of public loos did not cause members much worry. Everyone seemed to have a routine of going into a café for a coffee and then taking the opportunity to use the loos, but of course, after another half hour the need for a loo comes round again. All very good for trade but costly on the customer!
- Some members know a pub/café/ coffee shop where they can slip in and use the loo anyway and there is even a new scheme where these places put a notice in the window welcoming passers-by to use the loo even if not buying. They have realised that this new custom encourages trade.

○ Future Topics

- *Should we have a Royal Family?*
- *Should we give to people begging in the streets?*
- *What happens next (after the referendum)?*
- *Is using pigs to develop human chimeras the way to go?*

If you have any more to offer, please email your suggestions:

vivienne.barker@gmail.com

○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society Group meeting will be on **Monday 4th July at 10.00am** at The Lion Hotel.

Those using the hotel's parking facilities are reminded that they should notify reception with their registration number.

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