

The Beginning

On Tuesday 7th of December 1967, a meeting was held at the “Crabb Mill” Public House in Oldswinford to consider the forming of a Men's Club in Pedmore. For the record, the cost of hiring the room was ten shillings and twelve shillings was collected in subscriptions.

The names of those attending were recorded: Mr Rogers, who acted as Chairman, Messers Gittins, Quevatre, Gittins (another of the same name?), Blair, Swift, Kerr, Jones, Mann, Sherr, Allen, Rogers and Wain. In addition apologies were received from Messers Bell, Gupwell, Wooldridge, Hill and Quiney.

It was agreed that a guest speaker should be invited to a further meeting to see what support might be forthcoming. Mr Kerr was asked to act as Chairman and Mr Jones as Secretary until a Committee could be formed.

Accordingly a further meeting took place in Pedmore Parish Room (now Pedmore School Hall) on Thursday, January 25 1968. A speaker had been invited, Sgt Renshaw from the West Mercia Constabulary, who spoke on police procedure with particular reference to Pedmore. The names of those attending were not recorded but 23 were present and £1:3:0 (old money) was collected in subscriptions.

A month later on Thursday February 29 a Mr Partington from Clent gave an illustrated talk on canals and waterways in England. At that meeting everyone agreed to hold a further meeting to consider “ the formation of a Club on more definite lines”. A date was set - April 4 1968.

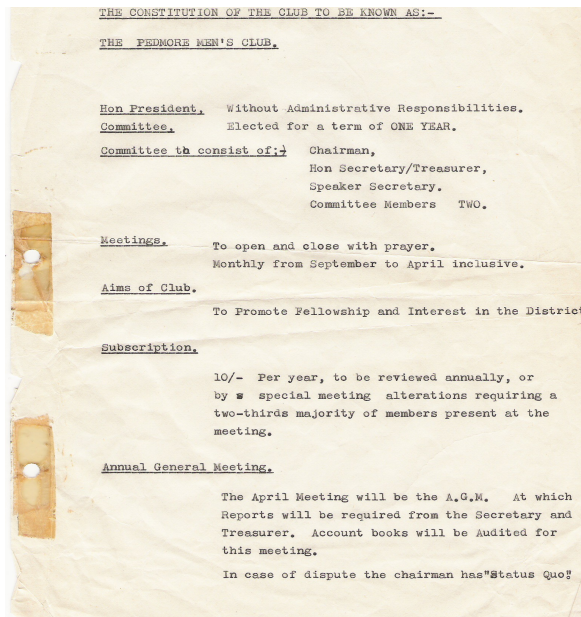
Accordingly a meeting took place and seventeen men attended on that date and it was agreed that:

- a Club be formed to be known as Pedmore Men's Club
- the Club to be affiliated to St Peter's Church
- a Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Speaker Secretary should be appointed, plus two additional Committee members
- meetings should open and close with prayers
- the aim was to promote fellowship and interest in the district
- a subscription to be set at 10 shillings a year
- an AGM would be held at the April meeting [See document reproduced below]

Some names that may be familiar begin to appear now – Kerr, Quiney, Rice, Jones and Cutler – all of whom were elected in 1968 to serve for one year.

Pedmore School continued to be the usual venue until July 1972 when it was agreed that a more suitable meeting place should be found. Why? There were concerns about traffic noise; one member objected to the “ unsightly wall bars” and Rev Roland Stockley commented on the fact that only tea was on offer at the meetings.

Accordingly a request was made to the Cricket Club to hold meetings there. It was agreed that PMC members would be registered as social members of the Cricket Club for a fee of 50p per member plus £20 per annum from PMC for use of the pavilion facilities. The first meeting in the cricket pavilion was held on October 19 1972 and thereafter the arrangement became permanent for the monthly meetings.



An early example of the constitution

Development

As early as November 1968 a pattern of monthly meetings became established to which a speaker was invited. Topics and speakers were extremely wide - ranging. A snapshot of records from October 1968 to October 1970 shows among others, talks on stained glass in Chartres Cathedral, oil exploration and drilling, the law and your neighbour in the garden, antique silver and Stourbridge old and new. Numbers present were recorded at some of these 29, 26, 24, in other words, meetings were attracting attendances of between 20 and 30.

Individual members will have their own particular favourites of course. Some that come to light include a talk on whisky distilling. The representative of the distilling company brought with him samples of a new product. On that occasion the President remarks that a speaker was not required. Few details appear to have been remembered with any clarity!

In January 2002 the speaker, David Birt, gave a talk entitled the Battle of Bewdley in which he described the chaos that ensued after parachutists were reported to be landing in local fields. A similar highly amusing talk was Those Old Radio Times by John Sparry, who took us back to the days of the Tommy Handley programmes.

In March 1999 Terry Billingham gave a moving account of his experiences in the Falklands War in which he was blinded. His account of his subsequent rehabilitation will long be remembered.

The speaker in March 1998 proved to be more practical - local artist and teacher Arnold Rogers painted his "talk" (Starting in Watercolours) and donated the resulting picture to the Club. It was subsequently used as a raffle prize and won by Club member David Holmes.

On occasions, members were called upon to take a more active part. A talk by David Hull on Mobility Scooters ended with a scooter race round the cricket field. A speaker from the Stourton Animal Sanctuary encouraged the then Chairman, Bob Macrow, to walk round the room with a large snake wrapped around his neck. Ken Quiney also recalls on that occasion stroking the head of a barn owl and realising somewhat to his surprise that it was quite flat!

Not all speakers were from outside. In March 2003, for example, Fred Brown showed a collection of films from the silent days under the title, "A Night at the Flicks".

Sample lists of speakers from over the years can be found in the Appendix. Most speakers would seem to have been well received, though not always. One member took exception to a talk given by Phil Drabble, describing the speaker as “ looking like a compost heap!”

The speaker for Chairman's Night (at one time described as the Chairman's Special Meeting), an annual event in the year's calendar, was chosen rather differently, it being the current Chairman's prerogative to make the choice. This system has continued in virtually the same form to the present.

In February 1974, “The Chairman's Special Meeting” as it was called, was held at Pedmore House. Tickets were £1 and members dined on Soup, Chicken in the Basket, Cheese and Biscuits and Coffee. The Chairman who presided over this feast was Geoff Rimmer. The speaker was a Wing Commander Harvey, who was given some cut glass for his efforts. The evening went extremely well, the speaker sent a letter of appreciation for his gift (a loss of £9.26 was made).

More recently, the event in 2003 at Stourbridge Golf Club was notable for being complete with bells and whistles! The speaker was Simon Topman, the managing director of the Acme Whistles Co. The talk was punctuated by the sounds of a variety of instruments, including, to the delight of the football fans , the Acme Thunderer.

The Raffle Fund

A feature which is characteristic of meetings is the raffle. It has become the custom for raffles to be held at the monthly meetings and at major social events. At the AGM the members then decide how the money they have raised shall be distributed between worthy charities.

There has been a tendency to favour charities which operate in the Stourbridge area. The list is far too long to reproduce here, but it can be seen to include the Sunfield Homes Clent, Pedmore Church, Pedmore Youth Organisations, Riding for the Disabled Hagley, the Air Ambulance, St Dunstan's and organisations supporting local health care and hospitals. In all, the list contains more than forty names. Due to the generosity of members, some £3960 has been distributed in the last ten years alone.

Additional Activities

While the pattern of monthly meetings continued, social events also became established (when members would bring wives, partners and guests along).

A popular early event was the Christmas party. From the late 60's, this was held at the house of Arthur Bell in Brake Lane, Hagley. The Minutes book for December '67 to May '70 records a Christmas Social.

“ A Christmas Social was held at Mr and Mrs Searle's and Mr Bell's Hagley. Sixty two people attended a very lively and pleasant affair. Entertainment, much enjoyed, by Wychbury Singers which included carol singing. Mr Stockley also entertained – much appreciated. The social finished at 11.45pm with everyone having enjoyed the evening. Mr Bob Davies was MC.”

David Darby recalls the food, three turkeys cooked by the wives, carol singing on the stairs and taking part in 30 minute sketches.

These early parties eventually evolved into the New Year's Eve parties which were a feature of the programme from 1974 until 2001. Arrangements for the first of these are recorded in the Minutes of 10 October 1974. Rigorous attempts were made to transform the school hall into a suitable venue by the use of streamers, balloons, cardboard(?), a Christmas tree and even the construction of a large fireplace! A mammoth effort was made to provide a feast:

“ 4 turkeys, 8 lbs of Ham, salads, 5lb cheese,

pickles, peanuts etc. and every Committee member was asked to be responsible for providing 2 dozen mince pies and two trifles.”

These were the days of elaborate cabarets performed by Club members sometimes with assistance of wives and other guests. We were reminded of an occasion when we were entertained by Hilary Wells who gave a serious rendering of the “Merry Pipes of Pan” without being aware that behind her a toilet system was being carefully assembled!

The New Year's Eve parties became hugely popular and continued until the return to a regular pattern of Christmas Social in 2002.



A scene from a cabaret. The “lady “ in the blonde wig, far left is Bob Macro. Many other notorious characters can be identified.

After Fred Brown returned from working abroad, he became Chairman and soon established a series of walks in the Shropshire countryside which became known as the Papermill Rambles . Fred himself writes:

A stroll in pleasant countryside followed by relaxation on the lawn with tea and biscuits. Since May 1994, stalwarts with wives and friends have met at Papermill Cottage, just outside Alveley. The home of Fred and Colleen, in the 19th century the area housed two mills, one of which was a papermill. Up to the last meeting, the weather has been favourable which has made the events more enjoyable. We look forward to many more meetings and hope many more members and guests will come and join us.

An event in either September or October featured in early programmes. During the 70's a treasure hunt using either car or coach transport found favour. But arranging an event so early in the season proved difficult and there were concerns about insurance so it lapsed in 1982. However, fashion changed and in September 1990, Bob Bowen organised a successful walk. This became a regular fixture. Sadly, in 1993, Bob Bowen who was then the current Chairman, died suddenly of a heart attack. The walk that year had

been organised by Ray Bartle and was renamed the Bob Bowen Memorial Walk. In 1995 the walk was sponsored and the money raised was donated to the building fund for the new church hall, now the St Peter's Centre. The walk enjoyed good support for many years but numbers dwindled and the last walk took place in 2001.



Fred leads off on the Papermill Ramble

A detailed list of all social events is too long to include. Events in the summer months were popular and included games of cricket and rounders (against the ladies), sports evenings, barbeques and river trips. When Roland Stockley's nose was badly injured it was raised in Committee whether such dangerous games were suitable.

A selection of outings is given in the Appendix. A visit to Drakelow tunnels in September 2002 is remembered as particularly interesting. Members recall with pleasure barn dances and skittles nights. One barn dance took place in a real barn – any conversion had been cosmetic and the temperature and outside loos were in keeping with the environment.

Commemorative Events

March 1977 saw the 10th anniversary of Pedmore Men's Club. It was celebrated in some style with a dinner dance at Stone Manor attended by members and their guests. Eleven years later we celebrated our 21st anniversary with a dinner at Hagley Country Club. Grant Baynham provided the entertainment. We were delighted on that occasion that 107 were able to attend, the room was almost uncomfortably full. To mark the event, each member was presented with a whisky tumbler engraved with his initials. In April 2007 the Club will celebrate its 40th anniversary with a dinner at Churchill and Blakedown Golf Club. A magician has been retained to entertain us. The current membership stands at 71 plus 4 Honorary members. On that occasion it is proposed that every member will receive a lapel badge which has been specially designed and is unique to Pedmore Men's Club.

We can look forward with confidence to our half century. Would, we wonder, the thirteen who in 1967 met in the Crabmill, have had any idea that in the 21st century, the Club would still be flourishing?

Appendix

— 1971 —	— 1972 —
SEPT 23 Mr. T. H. Jarrett Beer and Wine Making	JAN 27 Stourbridge Fire Brigade
OCT 16 Car Rally	FEB 24 Mr. A. Oakman Wark C.C.
OCT 28 Mr. Durham Our Waterways 1970	MAR 23 Mr. Manders Psychiatrist
NOV 25 Mr. E. Woodhall Collecting Antique's	MAR 24 Dinner
DEC 10 Xmas Party	APR 27 Mr. E. HOPKINS Stourbridge 100 years ago
	MAY 25 A.G.M.
	JNE. 22 Mr. Chancellor Films on Vintage Planes, etc.
	JLY. 27 Sport Night W.I. v. P.M.C.
The club was formed to promote fellowship among the men of the parish by regular meetings and discussions. Visitors are very welcome at any of our meetings.	The club meets monthly in the Parish Rooms, meetings commence at 7.45 p.m.
Subscriptions 75p	

The earliest known example of the programme card

Speakers and Topics – Snapshots from '76 - '77, '86 - '87, '96 - '97 and '06 - '07

<u>1976 -1977</u>	Sept Oct Nov Jan Feb Mar Apr	Express and Star Wine and Cheese National Trust AA on Your Car Severn Trent Water The Wooden Horse ATV <i>(Chairman's Night Guest speaker)</i>	A. Good A. Brown J. Dunsby D. Osborne P. Tommis
<u>1986 – 1987</u>	Sept Oct Nov Jan Feb Mar	Magistrate's Court Experiences of a Sports Writer Pot-Holing Local Radio Tales from the Black Country Bird's Eye View of the Midlands	J. Berry P. White Pot-Holing Club J. Hammersley Beacon Radio R. Hingley Vivian Bird
<u>1996 – 1997</u>	Sept Oct Nov Jan Feb Mar	Genealogy Falklands Then and Now Story of the Bayonet Looking After Your Lawnmower History of Corbett Hospital Personal Finance	J. Tromans B. Hancox P. Kerr C. Eccles E. Bowers P. Powell
<u>2006 -2007</u>	Sept Oct Nov Jan Feb Mar	Experiences of a Radio Actor Hand Made Chain Return of a Dream (The Titanic) Liquid Gold Parry Lightweight Suburban Railways Black Country Wordsmith	M. Reynolds R. Moss A. Lound T. Brake C. Lucas D. Bartley

Visits – A selection from the past years

Jan 1980	AA Headquarters Halesowen
Sept 2002	Drakelow Tunnels
Oct 2000	Theatre Visit Worcester
2001	Theatre Visit Worcester
Nov 2004	Theatre Visit Birmingham
July 2002	Halfpenny Green Vineyard
Sept 2000	Brinton's Carpets Kidderminster
Oct 1999	Nicholls & Perks Cellars
Apr 1998	Severn Trent Waterworks Trimpley
Apr 1999	Severn Trent Sewage Treatment Plant Droitwich
Nov 1981	Aston Villa Football Club
July 2003	Bodenham Arboretum
Nov 1977	Ironbridge Power Station

Compiled by Margaret Pickering from documents and with generous help from very many members.
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