



Probus Club of Sydney

www.sydneyprobus.org

Newsletter

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December 2020

Issue 427

MEETING DATES

December 1

DR MICHAEL SPENCE AC

Challenges and Plans for the Future at Sydney University
AT THE UNION, UNIVERSITY & SCHOOLS CLUB AND ON ZOOM!

February 2

DR JOHN HEWSON

2021, an even more challenging year?

March 2

CHARLES AITKEN

The Local and Global Investment Climate

ACTIVITIES

December Tuesday 8

Christmas Luncheon Dunbar House
(Waitlist only)

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General Meeting Report

Book Reviews

Recipe of the Month

Mystery Photo and much more!

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen

The November meeting was exceptional with an extremely interest talk on the NSW Bushfires by Professor Mary O’Kane. If you weren’t able to attend, I would suggest that you watch the recording of the talk which you can access through the Club’s website.

Next month should offer another outstanding meeting, with the speaker being Professor Michael Spence, the Vice Chancellor of Sydney University, who will be leaving shortly to take up a position at University College, London.

December we will hold our annual Christmas lunch at Watson’s Bay. If you haven’t booked already, I’m sorry to say that you are too late! We reached our maximum number this week.

For our new members particularly, could I ask that you seriously consider joining the committee in a back-up role? It’s not onerous and you will find that it will give you a much greater insight into the club.

Adrian Pilton

President

Note - The December meeting will be both face-to-face at the Union, University and Schools Club and on Zoom, the link is below.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81458615020>

**The link above to the December Zoom meeting
Click 5-10 minutes prior to 10.00am on Dec 1**

DECEMBER GUEST SPEAKER WILL JOIN US ON ZOOM!

DR MICHAEL SPENCE AC

University of Sydney
BA LLB Sydney DPhil PG Dip Theol Oxford



Current Challenges and Plans for the Future at Sydney University

Dr Michael Spence is the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Sydney – the first to open its doors in Australia in 1850.

Under his leadership, the University is forging a distinctive strategy focused on the transformation of the undergraduate education; interdisciplinary research; improving the culture of the institution; simplifying organisational design; campus redevelopment; investment in research and teaching infrastructure and securing financial sustainability. He was instrumental in leading the University's unprecedented \$1 billion INSPIRED philanthropic campaign, and promoting greater academic partnerships with industry, government and community organisations.

An alumnus of the University of Sydney, Dr Spence graduated with first-class honours in English, Italian and law. His other languages include Chinese and Korean. He lectured in law at the University and worked for the Australian Copyright Council prior to undertaking doctoral studies at the University of Oxford. There, he obtained a Doctor of Philosophy, a Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and became a Fellow of St Catherine's College at Oxford. During his 20 years at the College, he headed Oxford's law faculty and its Social Sciences division.

In 2017, he was awarded a Companion of the Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours for service to leadership of the tertiary education sector, to the advancement of equitable access to educational opportunities, to developing programs focused on multidisciplinary research, and to the Anglican Church of Australia.

After 12 years as Vice Chancellor, Dr Spence is leaving in December to become Principal & Provost of Imperial College London. We are honoured that he has made time in his extremely hectic final week on campus to speak with us.

Note - Due to extreme time constraints, Michael will be joining our meeting via zoom.

NEXT YEAR'S GUEST SPEAKERS

FEBRUARY 2

DR JOHN HEWSON AM



2021, an even more challenging year?

After growing up in Sydney and graduating from Sydney University, then University of Regina (Canada), John Hewson obtained a doctorate in economics at John Hopkins University, along the way to a remarkably wide distinguished career in academia, bureaucracy, business, politics, and the media.

He is currently a Professor in the Crawford School of Public Policy at ANU, and an Adjunct Professor at Curtin, UTS, Canberra and Griffith Universities. Previous senior posts include Professor and Head of the School of Economics at UNSW, and Professor of Management and Dean Macquarie Graduate School of Management at Macquarie University.

He has worked for The Australian Treasury (Census and Statistics), the IMF, the Reserve Bank, the United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia & the Pacific, as well as the Asia Development Bank. He often advises senior public servants.

He has also had a significant impact on many areas of Australian life in business, politics, the media and charities

[For more details click here](#)

MARCH 2

CHARLES AITKEN

CEO Aitken Investment Management



The Local and Global Investment Climate

Charlie Aitken will bring us up to date on the current financial environment. Members will recall that his presentation last March was immediately preceding the impact of Covid 19 pandemic. So where are we now?

* * * * *

Meantime, any suggestions from members of possible speakers would be much appreciated. Please pass to Peter at <speakersprogram@sydneyprobus.org>

CONFIRMED SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER

Our Famous Christmas Luncheon at Dunbar House at Watsons Bay!

Tuesday 8 at 12.00noon

This event has now sold out, but you may wish to join the waitlist as there are always cancellations



A RECENT ACTIVITY

The Archibald Entries

On Tuesday 27 October, the Probus Club of Sydney visited the Art Gallery of NSW for guided tours of the paintings selected as finalists for the Wynne, Sulman and Archibald Prizes. There were 17 attendees and, due to Covid restrictions, we had the galleries to ourselves. There appeared to be a higher number of paintings by indigenous artists than in previous years and the Prizewinning pieces created much discussion and controversy, to the delight of the Gallery Trustees I'm sure! A very enjoyable morning was completed in the Gallery Cafe where many amateur judges voiced their opinions!



A PREVIEW OF THE WHARF REVUE!

A ZOOM WITH A VIEW!

(Don't Miss This! You will need about 30 minutes)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgwWGsGlbhk>

ORANGE and COWRA TOUR

Planning is afoot to restore the splendid tour of the attractive inner west district early in 2021. It is anticipated it will be close to the original itinerary, but we will let you know full details as they become available.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES DESK

Manned by the Activities Team, it is open at meetings for bookings and details of events.

[To book for activities click here](#)

You may contact the team by email

social@sydneyprobus.org

PAYMENT FOR ACTIVITIES

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) is the most used method for payment. [Click here for details](#)

EFTPOS "Tap and Go" at meetings is a quick and efficient. Cash is no longer accepted

To contact the Activities Team urgently –

John Carter 0408 612 238

David Brand 0414 908 226

ANOTHER FACE-TO-FACE MEETING AT THE UNION, UNIVERSITY & SCHOOLS CLUB!

Congratulations to President Adrian and Club Services Robert Warburton for the complex organisation of the simultaneous face-to-face meeting in the UUSC Dining Room and online Zoom

LIFE BEFORE PROBUS

Ross Blackmore



Ross was born in Cremorne. He attended Sydney Grammar School and Wagga Agriculture College. He was employed initially with the Stock and Station Company AML&F before starting a lifetime in the Agricultural Chemical industry. Ross spent 13 years employed by the Swiss group Ciba Geigy initially as a technical sales representative in Canberra and Bathurst. He left as WA State Manager.

He joined Velsicol Chemical Corporation as Australian Marketing Manager based in Sydney, 11 years later was offered the opportunity to form his own business, to run the Velsicol Australian, New Zealand, South Pacific, South Africa and Zimbabwe operations.

Finally, with his wife Ross jointly owned and ran Turramurra Travel and Cruiseabout. It achieved a number of travel industry awards and grew to a staff of 9. It was eventually purchased by Flight Centre.

Ross has three children and seven wonderful grandchildren. Denise passed away in June 2018. He is still a member of Kincumber Rotary Club and Terrigal Haven Probus Club. His interests are flying (he still holds a pilot's license), travel, food, wine, classical music.



Morning Tea was again served at tables

PROF MARY O'KANE AC

NSW Bushfire Inquiry 2020



Mary O'Kane delivered an absorbing presentation that incorporated a thorough description of the bushfire inquiry from the Terms of Reference, through to the severity of the fires, how the inquiry functioned, major misconceptions and a selection of the recommendations.

Some of the misconceptions included the fire being significantly caused by arson, the volume of the fuel load being the main problem and the support of the 'stay and defend' approach. In reality these were 'monster' fires, following extreme drought conditions, spreading quickly even at night, mainly started by lightning and fanned by high winds that spread embers enormous distances.

Key contributing factors were the dryness of the fuel load (rather than its quantity), the remote origins and the heavy smoke making it difficult for firefighting services to accurately locate the fire front.

Mary touched on the health impacts of the fires and finally a review of some of the major recommendations of the inquiry.

John Thom accurately conveyed the enormous appreciation of the members. Many members approached Mary at lunch to convey their appreciation of the presentation.

[The full Zoom video is here](#) The passcode is required nJ955\$4g

[A link to the Report is here](#) The Executive Summary provides an overall picture.

RAY HYSLOP IS UNWELL

Unfortunately, we have to report that Ray had a stroke a few weeks ago and is still in rehabilitation. The good news is that he is improving, and hopes are held for a substantial recovery in the near future. We will miss Ray in the short term and send best wishes for a rapid recovery.

A SHORT JOURNEY INTO THE PAST

In 1942, two Japanese died at Taylor's Bay when their mini submarine exploded. In 2002, The Mosman Historical Society erected a plaque on the headland of the bay to

commemorate their deaths. An unveiling ceremony was held at which the mayor and the Japanese Consul both spoke.

Kyoko and I were unaware that this event was to take place. Fortunately, our neighbour, Admiral Robertson, gave us the news. So, on a cloudless summer's morning, we crossed the road in front of our house, descended the steps to Chowder Bay and followed the bush track around to Taylor's Bay. We walked the track four mornings a week to keep fit so had no time to stop and enjoy the views. This leisurely stroll gave us a new perspective and was particularly enjoyable.

When we arrived, there were about a dozen people waiting. As the only Japanese present Kyoko became the focus of attention and some of the group came over to offer words of sympathy and understanding. "You are, of course, too young to remember the war" observed the oldest of the ladies present.

"No, I remember the end of the war as I was born the year the sailors died. I clearly remember how hungry I was."

The oldest lady then told us that she had lived, all her life, in the same house, overlooking the bay. On the morning of the incident, she heard the explosion and reached the balcony of her home in time to see the shock wave reach the beach. She told us it was some days before they found out what had happened.

The official party arrived. They came from Cremorne so had walked the track for two kilometres and were feeling the heat, especially the Consul. The mayor spoke diplomatically, praising the courage of the sailors. He regretted the tragedy of war and rejoiced in the current good relations between our two countries. He congratulated the Society on their initiative. The Consul spoke first in Japanese and then in English. His first speech was fluently opaque in the Japanese manner, but the English speech was confused and barely comprehensible. He thanked the Society for their gesture; clearly, he did not want to talk about the war.

After the ceremony, there was general socialising in which the Consul and Kyoko were fully engaged. Admiral Robertson played a leading role. After a while, it seemed that the Consul began to comprehend that the goodwill expressed by the group towards Japan was genuine. The plaque represented a reconciliation that was sincerely felt. He stayed longer than I had expected and was very jovial by the time he left.

We walked home stopping frequently to enjoy the spectacular views of the harbour and the city. Kyoko was somewhat pensive. She explained, 'I have never felt unwelcome in Australia but now, for the first time, I feel at home.' Since then, we always stop at the plaque, admire the view and remember the sailors.

Kyoko's feeling cannot justify the sailor's deaths but in some small way they did not die in vain.

Terry Young



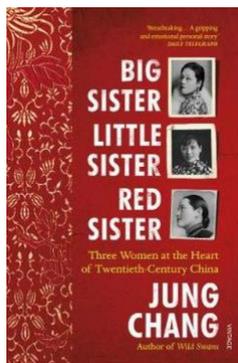
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5Mba8ncBso>

What a contrast to the present day!

BOOK REVIEWS

BIG SISTER, LITTLE SISTER AND RED SISTER

By Jung Chang (2019)



For anyone interested in the history of modern China, this is a good read. These three Soong sisters were at the centre of the making of modern China. Big Sister (Ei-ling) became the principal adviser to Chiang Kai-shek, and enormously rich. Little Sister (May-ling) married Chiang and with him survived the Communist victory and the escape to Taiwan. Red Sister (Ching-ling) married Sun Yat-sen, the founder of modern China and, after his death, became Mao's vice chair and a dedicated communist. So, from about 1914, until the death of Little Sister in 2003 these sisters were at the centre of Chinese politics.

The author is famous for *Wild Swans* (1991) and other works on modern China, where apparently her books are banned. Although this book is heavily footnoted and appears to be factual, being the biography of the three sisters it may not be considered by scholars as history. It may or may not be an acceptable historical reference – but conveys the colour and immediacy of critical events in the history of modern China. At least one of our book club members has been inspired to start reading the history of that period.

It paints a detailed and all description of Sun and Chiang, contrary to the legends I learnt at school. Also, some of the sisters are controversial because of their lives of wealth, privilege and possible corruption. Well worth reading for anyone interested in the history of modern China.

Finally, it contains some new (to me) material on one of the reasons Chiang was defeated by Mao. Not to be disclosed here as a spoiler alert but also because it is probably quite controversial.

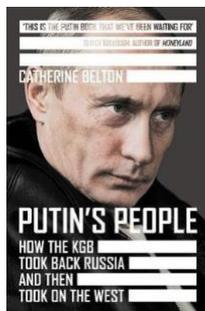
Well written and a good, if over-long, read.

David Castle

PUTIN'S PEOPLE

How the KGB took back Russia and then took on the West

Catherine Belton



This deeply concerning and meticulously-researched book is not an easy read – many unfamiliar and forgettable Russian names, and an overload of complicated financial and economic details. However, if you can dodge around those drawbacks this is not a book to be missed if you have an interest in Putin's Russia today.

Catherine Belton was Moscow correspondent for the *Financial Times* from 2007 to 2013 and has also reported on Russia for *The Moscow Times* and *Business Week*. She is currently an investigative correspondent for Reuters

The story she lays out of the former KGB people and criminal gangs who now control Russia is chilling. This has become a system in which Putin and his friends have seized command of all significant economic life, vastly enriching themselves in the process – Putin's Black Sea palace was built at a cost in excess of US\$1 billion. They also have complete control over the news media and the courts.

Surprisingly, perhaps, Putin and his people accept that communism was a failure but are nevertheless intent on trying to regain for Russia the role of a dominant world power once enjoyed by the Soviet Union. Hence the deployment of the vast wealth at their disposal to interfere with and undermine Western democracies, in Europe and the US in particular. Some US\$800 billion has been stashed offshore since the Soviet collapse, more than the wealth held by the entire Russian population in the country itself. Russian money has become the new strategic weapon.

The final chapter of this large (500-page) book refers to Donald Trump's engagement with Putin and the KGB people. So deep was this connection that on the day his election as President was announced the members of the Russian parliament leapt to their feet in raucous applause. 'The liberal idea has become obsolete,' said Putin later.

Les Anderson

ARTICLES ON THE WEBSITE NOTICE BOARD

The link to the zoom recording of PROF MARY O'KANE

How to buy Australian Food

To view any of these articles [click here](#)

SQUIZ SHORTCUT

Vladimir Putin

Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, is in the news a lot. Whether it's on the diplomatic trail, in dealings with the US and other big nations, or in relation to the poisoning of political opponents, he's someone worth knowing a bit more about. This episode of Squiz Shortcuts takes a look at who he is, how he came to be the leader, his broad agenda and how he is using his increasing power

<https://www.thesquiz.com.au/shortcuts/squiz-shortcuts-vladimir-putin/>

AND WHILE WE HAVE YOU . . .

BEAUTIFUL IRISH HUMOUR!

Six retired Irishmen were playing poker in O'Leary's apartment when Paddy Murphy loses £500 on a single hand, clutches his chest, and drops dead at the table. Showing respect for their fallen brother, the other five continue playing standing up.

Michael O'Connor looks around and asks, 'Oh, me boys, someone's got to tell Paddy's wife. Who will it be?'

They draw straws. Paul Gallagher picks the short one. They tell him to be discreet, be gentle, don't make a bad situation any worse.

'Discreet? I'm the most discreet Irishmen you'll ever meet. Discretion is me middle name. Leave it to me.'

Gallagher goes over to Murphy's house and knocks on the door. Mrs. Murphy answers, and asks what he wants.

Gallagher declares, 'Your husband just lost £500, and is afraid to come home.'

'Tell him to drop dead!', says Murphy's wife.

'I'll go tell him.' says Gallagher.

ENGINEERS!

Two engineering students were biking across a university campus when one said, "Where did you get such a great bike?"

The second engineer replied, "Well, I was walking along yesterday, minding my own business, when a beautiful woman rode up on this bike, threw it to the ground, took off all her clothes and said, "Take what you want."

The first engineer nodded approvingly and said, "Good choice; The clothes probably wouldn't have fit you anyway."

A HUMEROUS VIEW OF THE USA ELECTION!



In late 1996, just after Bill Clinton had beaten Bob Dole in the presidential election but before the inauguration, Bill and Hillary are in the presidential motorcade just leaving Little Rock Arkansas, heading back to that town's airport, where Airforce One is awaiting to take them back to Washington. As they pass by a tiny, dingy little garage on the edge of town, just as dusk falls, Hillary points it out and says, "You see that garage, Bill? I used to go out with the man that owns that garage."

Wryly amused, the president chortles and says, "That is amazing, Hillary! Just think, if you had married him, you'd be the wife of a garage proprietor."

"No, Bill," Hillary says firmly. "If I'd married him, he'd be president."

DONALD TRUMP AT NATO

(with voiceover!)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1weSwmEs18>

RECIPE OF THE MONTH!

CHICKEN AND MUSHROOM FILO PARCELS

Serves 6

Ingredients

400 chicken breast fillets cut into 1cm pieces
2 tablespoons flour seasoned with salt and pepper
1 onion finely diced
100g button mushrooms roughly chopped
420g can cream of chicken soup
2 tablespoons sour cream
½ cup freshly chopped parsley
18 sheets filo pastry
50g melted butter
2 tablespoons of Sesame seeds



Method

Toss chicken in seasoned flour.

Heat a dash of oil in a frying pan. Stir fry chicken to colour. Add onion and mushrooms and cook for 2 minutes. Pour in the can soup, stir and simmer for 10 minutes until chicken is cooked.

Stir in sour cream and parsley then cool completely.

Brush a sheet of filo with melted butter. Place a second buttered sheet on top and top with a third sheet. Place 1/6 of the chicken mixture into the middle of the bottom third of the filo. Fold in pastry sides and roll. Repeat to make 6 parcels.

Place parcels seam side down on a tray lined with baking paper.

Brush tops with a little more butter and sprinkle with sesame seeds

Bake at 200°C for 20-25 minutes.

Lynne Hurley

HOW TO CONTACT A COMMITTEE MEMBER

To contact any committee member [Click here](#)

Please use email where possible or telephone if you require urgent contact.

THIS LADY IS LOOKING UP TO HER FUTURE DO YOU KNOW WHO SHE IS?



Send your answer to

newsletter@sydneyprobus.org

FIRST THREE CORRECT ANSWERS

WILL RECEIVE A

LUNCHEON VOUCHER!

Congratulations to

Winners last month

Neil Martin, Wayne Jones,
Terry Young and David Barnett

HEY, READERS WHERE ARE YOU, CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE?

Please contact the Editor, Tony Andrew!

newsletter@sydneyprobus.org

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