

# Dull Men's Club gives us a headline we thought we'd never write... This subject is not even remotely of interest to anyone

By Jane Bakowski  
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DID you know that the luggage carousel at Brussels international airport moves in a clockwise direction?

So does the one in Lagos, Nigeria. Interestingly, though, when your suitcase comes to meet you at Liverpool's John Lennon airport, it will be moving in an anti-clockwise direction.

It is facts like these which arouse, if not exactly excitement, at least a small frisson in members of the Dull Men's Club, an organisation dedicated to "celebrating the ordinary".

However, founder and club president Leland Carlson, who was in Kent recently to help celebrate the 250th anniversary of the sandwich, insists: "There's more to leading a dull life than watching paint dry. Of course, we like to watch paint dry, but we like to watch wood warp, too."

He explained: "We get a bucket of water and put wood in it. And if we're feeling frisky, we may take bets on whether it warps concave or convex."

## Like-minded

The London-based former tax lawyer's trip to the county convinced him that it harbours a rich pool of like-minded men.

Speaking to the Courier from his childhood home in Nebraska, where annual Kool-Aid Days mark the local invention of the popular soft drink, he said: "Tunbridge Wells has a worldwide reputation for being dull, so I think this club could be a natural home for your men."

As well as updating its airport carousel report, believed to be the most extensive ever undertaken, the club keeps a calendar of events like cheese-rolling competitions and Bubblewrap Appreciation Day, and points members towards societies concerned with



**DULL MAN'S DELIGHT:** Queuing for souvenirs at the Olympics

everything from clouds and cornduroy to rhubarb and roundabouts.

"We like museums of everyday, ordinary things like coat hangers and lawnmowers, too," said Mr Carlson, who has created a section called Safe Excitement. "We enjoy races, too, but Formula 1 and Ascot are far too exciting for us. We like slower, more ordinary things – racing snails, shopping trolleys, milk floats, things like that."

The website's on-going report on roundabouts has hit a chord with dull men everywhere, with thrilling pictures of multiple roundabouts from Swindon to Hemel Hempstead appearing alongside detailed descriptions including road numbers.

However, it was the crowds at the London Olympics which really stirred strongish feelings among members revelling in the experience of standing in – and taking pictures of – some of the longest queues of their lives.

One e-mailed: "I'm here. The queues are real. They are fantastic. 2012 will be the year to remember."

On the face of it, Trevor Poile from Southborough, a man who spends his waking hours either sitting on local council commit-

tees or working on his home-based computer software business, seems a likely candidate for the Dull Men's Club. But appearances can be deceptive, for it turns out he is a natural risk-taker.

## Cut up

He said: "I take my life into my hands every time I cycle to the Town Hall along London Road – only yesterday I was cut up by a car at the Grosvenor Road roundabout. And when I was in Amsterdam, I was at a crossroads where the lights weren't working and I just had to take a chance."

However Langton Green photographer David Bartholomew, a man who celebrates the ordinary every day on the Tunbridge Wells Project website, looks more hopeful. Along with Chris Cassidy, he is compiling an ever-growing catalogue of photographs of local buildings, many empty, all devoid of people.

His warts-and-all photos are as likely to be of toilets and corridors as notable architecture, so would certainly be of interest to Mr Carlson and his men.

"But I'm not sure about watching paint dry," confessed Mr Bartholomew. "Wouldn't that be just a bit, well, dull?"



**NOT SO DULL?** Councillor and daredevil cyclist Trevor Poile KC1112062/1

## Event's aim to involve seniors in community

OLDER people around Tunbridge Wells are being encouraged to join in with their community via groups, services or supporting local businesses.

Anyone aged 50 and over is invited to a free event in the Camden Centre, off Camden Road, where they can find out what is on offer in Tunbridge Wells and chat to the people involved.

From tea dances and universities to police and arthritis support, there will be dozens of stalls with information, advice, clothing and activities.

It will be held on September 28 between 11am and 2.30pm and is open to anyone who wants to find out about services for those aged 50 and above.

## Support

It is run by the charity Voluntary Action Within Kent, which supports groups, charities and organisations.

Community services manager Fiona Watkins said the event was also a way to mark International Day of Older People.

She added: "We have all the stalls."

"Now all we need are the people to come and visit."

Entry is free for the public and there will be refreshments and a raffle.

## Hunting for yesterday's Lumberjills

A SEARCH has been launched for 'Lumberjills' who worked in Bedgebury and other forests in Kent during the Second World War.

The Forestry Commission wants to uncover the history of the Women's Timber Corps on its 70-year anniversary.

More than 8,000 young women from all over Britain left home, many for the first time, and were posted into forests to carry out the heavy work of felling and crosscutting trees by hand.

## Sawmills

They also measured logs and worked in sawmills, as well as loading timber onto trucks, driving tractors and other haulage vehicles.

The Women's Timber Corps was set up in 1942, as an offshoot of the Land Army.

The Lumberjills, who were from all backgrounds and dressed in distinctive uniforms with a green beret, filled in for men away fighting.

Peter d'Aguilar of Bedgebury



**WOOD WORK:** Lumberjills at Bedgebury

National Pinetum and Forest said: "The work of the Lumberjills is an important part of the history of our forests – but very little is known about them. Anyone who can pass on their reminiscences will help us to recognise their contribution to the war effort and write this forgotten chapter in history."

Project chiefs hope to record

stories and experiences from people that come forward, and plan to create a website with transcriptions of memories and donated images to celebrate the contribution of the Lumberjills.

■ If you or a member of your family served in the Women's Timber Corps call e-mail peter.d'aguilar@forestry.gov.uk or call 01580 213049.

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