

Welcome

From the Editor:

The air has cooled like a relationship gone bad, and the calendars we look to grudgingly to mark the passage of time has reminded us, subtly, that the summer that wasn't is, mercifully, no more. This passing of seasons evokes the notion of the tree falling in the woods with no one there to hear it. And although that metaphor never sat well with me (the animals inhabiting the woods can hear it perfectly well, can't they?), it's appropriate in the scope of what we look to in this month's edition of Tipoffs - some recognition for the project management industry.

Lindsay Scott gratefully indulges our tree in the woods idea. Tired of hearing about the trouble with project management theme whenever a Terminal 5 goes bad in the daily rags, Scott ratchets up much-deserved support for the industry by seeking out the many scenarios when project management goes well. So well, ultimately, that the negative connotations of the bad times outrank the positive vibes of the good times in the soon-to-be-chartered industry.

The scrutiny that tends to follow the bad times in PM will be ratcheted up by the build-up and project deadlines caused by the London Olympics in 2012. Mick Hides turns to the history of big projects in England, and goes behind why those projects perceived to be failures could benefit from message control that would, in turn, eliminate the initial poor perceptions.

Our resident perceiver at the recent PPSOSIG conference in Coventry, Gary Holmes, gives his reflections on the ideals and goals for the theme of 'Sweating Your Assets.' Zoe Jones returns to the fold with a piece on public image projects and success rates that only she could give in the proper perspective.

John Thorpe wraps it all up nicely with some insight into what the public expects from the project manager in the first place, and the effects of chartered status on such expectations.

We had a huge response to last month's Tipoffs, and we always look forward to your submissions and articles. As they taught us in the communications curriculum at university, keep writing. And while you're at it, keep reading! We receive requests to write for our newsletters all the time.

Do you want to contribute to a future issue of Project Management Tipoffs? We are always looking for contributions from the next great writer out there looking to share their knowledge, experience and expertise in the project management industry.

For more information, drop me a line at editor@arraspeople.co.uk. Doubtless you'll have a better take than me about what the animals think of a tree falling in the woods!

Dan Strayer, Editor

London 2012: It's all a matter of perception... and Proboscidean considerations



By Mick Hides

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New vacancies at Arras People*



[Visit the Project Management Job board for more vacancies](#)

"London 2012" links

For more information on the countdown to London 2012, go their official web site [here](#).

Issues with the Millenium Dome project were aplenty. For a complete rundown of the Dome's project history, follow this [Wikipedia chronology](#).

Fantasy Projects - A Top Five List

By Nicola Thorp

Given the opportunity to come up with five fantasy projects I found myself stumped after two - a lot

Now that we have entered the period of being official host city for the 2012 Olympics, I started to think about the scale of the project involved in making it all happen. This leads to the inevitable question that yet again are we setting ourselves up for failure? But is failure inevitable and could we learn from history to achieve success?

We do not need to think too hard before a range of project failures spring to mind. From the late delivery of Wembley to any number of Government IT projects, you could be mistaken for believing that we are not very good at big projects (just to balance the argument read the article from Lindsay Scott).

But let's think about that more closely. To make things easier we will use as an example of a project that most people agree was not our finest moment: The Millennium Dome.

Starting with the positive stuff it achieved its most important milestone by being 'finished' for the Millennium celebrations. Technically the structure was iconic and overcame many engineering obstacles. But that is where the back slapping ends. From the beginning it was never very clear what the Dome was all about. Right until it opened there never appeared to be any agreement about what it was meant to be; or do.

For me the Dome will always symbolise the very worst of a politically-motivated, committee-designed project. I have spoken to people who attended the finished article and they are always commending of what was delivered. Unfortunately the project can be easily summarised by "never let the facts get in the way of a good story".

Therein lies one of the key lessons for major projects and to a lesser extent all projects. As project manager you have a responsibility to maintain the perceptions of the project. A mishandled perception can quickly lead to project sponsors questioning their confidence in the project. As we have seen in the last few weeks, confidence (or lack of it) can have significant implications in the business world.

Returning to our 2012 Team, they will be judged on their results but along the way they need to manage the perceptions and expectations of the world.

One of my earliest project management lessons was learning how to eat an elephant. The answer, as many of you will know, is to break our analogous elephant down into smaller pieces. For London 2012 the first problem arises and already we are seeing the outcomes in two distinct camps. The most obvious outcome is the month of competition (if you combine the Olympics and Paralympics). Of equal importance, some would say, is the legacy issues, i.e. benefits left to the citizens of London (and wider UK) such as new sporting facilities, improved transportation systems and community regeneration. One key lesson has already been learnt and the project is keen to leave no 'white elephants' such as the aforementioned Dome.

Having a clear understanding of what is to be achieved has always been cited as a key contributor to success. Take the first moon landing, driven by U.S. President John F. Kennedy's speech in 1961.

"I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth," he said.

Just as important is that once agreed, plans are not changed or circumvented by political (be it with a p or P) interference.

Considering the scale of London 2012, perhaps we should really think of this as a series of projects. Whether one of the new purpose built facilities, an upgraded venue or loan each must be ready and to standard on time. What about the volunteer force? Without a properly prepared volunteer force the Games cannot operate effectively.

Consider as well that for the 2004 Athens Olympics there were 160,000 applicants for the 60,000 posts. Already there are reports of significant skill deficits (87,000) in the construction area. The importance of these issues may be insignificant given the £9bn budget and reputations at stake.

The significance of working on a project that has poor perceptions

of areas requiring improvement have already got projects under way or are at least at the planning stage.

- Make road tax chargeable on road rage monitoring - all cars fitted with a black box/ swear box the more you raise your voice or swear the more road tax you pay. Working towards a calmer UK road network.
- Man on Mars - it's been suggested loads but has anyone actually put a plan together to make it happen?
- Additional day to the weekend - Monday is the worst day of the week, let's turn it into a good day by making it the new Sunday.
- Free fruit for under 18's - same as the old free bottle of milk a day issued to schools but this time it's fruit (a variety so kids don't get bored and there's no excuses for the fussy ones), let's encourage our 5 a day from a young age.
- Retinal system - our eyes are scanned as we enter stores, tubes etc and we can purchase without using a card or cash, reducing the risk of muggings etc.

I would personally go for world peace, scrap cars for a better public transport network to reduce pollution and end poverty - in danger of sounding like a Miss World contestant I know these are the things on the minds of most people when asked: what would you change?

There are hundreds of projects underway throughout the world working on these issues turning fantasy to reality.

Nicola Thorp is a Recruitment Consultant for Arras People.

"High profile" links

can be very demotivated. I for one have felt shivers when informed of being transferred to a project that has 'bad press'. A project that has a poor perception can quickly gain apathy and becomes a self fulfilling prophecy.

Managing the perceptions of everyone can be as important as delivering on time and to budget irrespective if your project is on a global stage or more local level. You owe it to yourself to avoid your project be labelled as a poor performer. Ensure people want to work on it and to prevent anyone exploiting the situation to their advantage.

Let's hope that those in charge of the 2012 project(s) have included these thoughts into their risk process.

Mick Hides is a Recruitment Consultant for [Arras People](#). He blogs at [How to Manage a Camel](#).

TrainingZone.co.uk blogs about The Apprentice [here](#).

Does high profile PM failure mean the whole industry needs to suffer?



By Zoe Jones

Terminal 5, ID cards, 2012...these are just a few of the high profile national projects that have grabbed the headlines over the past 12 months. In an age where bad news sells and tabloids hunt down their next victim with a blood thirsty hunger has public perception become a KPI? For how long will the winner of "The Apprentice" be the UK's most well known Project Manager? Is there scope for a caped crusader to come along, turn round delayed or over budget national projects and reverse some of the negative PR currently a feature of our national project portfolio?

Planes, trains and automobiles - the UK transport infrastructure is a subject close to our hearts. The shortcomings of the UK rail network are well-known and attempts to introduce change are met by the press and public with a heavy degree of cynicism. A new low was reached with the disastrous delivery of Terminal 5, criticism of which was so harsh and so public (an international slamming none the less) that British Airways has felt the need to launch an entire advertising campaign attempting to overturn public perception.

The Olympics - where to start? Controversial compulsory purchase orders, a heavily criticized logo, Beijing raising the benchmark to unprecedented highs, a budget that has arguably never been under control and a predicted labour shortage to add to the mix. The press attention and constant criticism of expenditure is understandable, though there does seem to be an element of schadenfraude within the British public when it comes to such large scale events or rollouts. We love to criticize, speculate, anticipate the worst, only to later roll up and use, attend, consume or purchase the end result with boundless vigour.

If admittedly smaller, cheaper, less demanding public events are anything to go by, the nation will continue to observe, calculate and criticize for the next 3.5 years before rolling out a wonderfully equipped, fantastically over-budget Olympics which will be supported by millions and later deemed by the press to be a raging success. For example, the Queen's 80th birthday party in 2006 was publicly derided, scrutinized and mocked. Yet by the time the date loomed it was fantastically well attended and reported to be one of the most well-delivered events in recent UK history.

Where will this end? Two up and coming national projects aim to improve services at the very heart of the British public - telly and the NHS. Digital Switchover and the National Programme for IT can expect their press coverage to ramp up as their go live dates rapidly approach. If the calls for Willie Walsh's resignation following the launch of T5 are anything to go by, the potential public outcry that would occur if digital switchover impeded people's ability to watch "Coronation Street" must be causing a few sleepless nights on the delivery team.

"PPSO SIG" links

For more information about the Programme and Project Support Office Specialist Interest Group, click [here](#).

The increasing celebrity status of figures within the business world perpetuates the problem. Through programmes such as "Dragons Den" and "The Apprentice", the public have become accustomed to judging the performance of professionals with little understanding of the environment in which they work. Perhaps such high profile rollouts should fight fire with fire and think about hiring Max Clifford to represent their troubled project in addition to his latest fragile star? Or enlisting Alan Sugar to utilize a real life, public interest project as one of his weekly challenges?

Zoe Jones is a Project Management Consultant for [Arras People](#).

One Short Trip to Coventry Equals a New Perspective on PPSOs



By Gary Holmes

This year's PPSO Special Interest Group autumn conference took place at Warwick Conferences in Coventry. Given the current financial climate and the effect that this is having on both existing and potential projects, the theme of the conference was that of sweating the assets of the PPSO or PMO so as to get the most value out of existing resources and potentially limited funds.

The conference took place over a day and a half and was centralized around the following themed presentations:

1. **PPSO Physical Resources, by John Zacher, CITI**
The aim here was to demonstrate how the physical characteristics of a PPSO can be maximized so as to provide a better service to the Project Managers and Senior Managers who use it.
2. **Personal Skills Inventory, by Lain Burgos-Lovece, Serissa Ltd.**
This presentation focused primarily on getting the most out of the people within the PPSO so as to help the overall performance of the team. Lain discussed how different people's strengths and personalities in the work place can be used in various ways to maximize not only their own potential but that of the team also.
3. **Risk Identification and Management, by Adrian Wilson, CITI**
An investigation into the murky world of Risk Management, this presentation dealt with highlighting the advantages of having an effective best practice in place for risk, along with the best methods and techniques to develop this practice.
4. **Earned Value, by Adrian Wilson**
This section looked at the tools and techniques used to measure the Earned Value of ongoing projects. Although focusing primarily on project cost and budget use, the discussion also branched out to look at how the techniques could be used in other areas such as project resourcing so as to assess how time and effort may be used.
5. **Configuration and Change Management, by Adrian Wilson**
Presentation aimed at highlighting the ways in which Configuration Management and Change control can best be used by a PPSO, in terms of when it should be employed and with what methods.
6. **Managing Information - Sink or Swim, by Lain Burgos-Lovece**
The first presentation of day two looked at the different ways of capturing and presenting project information within the PPSO, along with the ways in which this information can be used to drive the Lessons Learned phase of the lifecycle.
7. **Future Assets, by Andy Murray, lead author of Prince2 Refresh**
Murray served up an ace of a final presentation by giving us all a glimpse of what to expect from the new version of Prince2 when it reaches us next year.

"Public Sector" links

Check out the finalists

Between the presentations, everyone present was encouraged to stimulate discussion and offer up their own opinions on the various topics by drawing on personal experience. In many ways these exercises proved to be as useful as the presentations themselves, as they highlighted that every PPSO is different in its approach and the personal challenges it faces, and that there is never a definitive right method that a department should adopt. I know from chatting to people about this at the evening meal and drinks as day one wound down that many people felt the same with regard to this, and liked the fact that the aim of the conference was to share knowledge, as opposed to simply listening and learning.

All in all the conference is a good chance to get a fresh perspective on your PPSO whilst making some new contacts in a friendly and vibrant atmosphere. The next conference is in the spring of next and I personally recommend it if you are looking to expand your knowledge base and improve your approach. If you would like any further information take a look at the link to www.ppsosig.co.uk.

Gary Holmes is a Recruitment Consultant for [Arras People](#), and blogs at [How to Manage a Camel](#).

and/or winners in the BCS's prestigious [2007 Project Excellence Awards](#)

Learn more about Successful **PR**ojects in Government (SPRinG) at [their own web site](#)

There's plenty of information online about [OGC's case studies](#)

The Cabinet Office has a great resource concerning [Reliable Project Delivery](#)

Make Public Sector Project Success Public



By *Lindsay Scott*

"The difference between failure and success is doing a thing nearly right and doing a thing exactly right." - Edward Simmons

When given the topic for this month's Tipoffs article ("Success in public projects - how easy is it to find the success stories?"), I just wanted to remind myself that project success is something that happens frequently; it's just that we stopped looking for it for a while. We were too busy being distracted by discussing and contemplating projects like the NHS NPfIT (will it ever get on track and not cost a fortune?) and the Department for Work and Pensions incredible 21 years overrun ([not to mention £315 million overspend](#)).

There's much to celebrate when the project is successful but it's not often something we take the time to do before moving on to the next project, an issue that has also been recognised by the International Project Management Day (scheduled for November this year) "The theme this year is about celebrating successes in project management and demonstrating its value to business and other project management communities". There's also a recent article from Kepner-Tregoe entitled "[The Seven Essentials for Project Success](#)" which amongst other good advice focuses on "Make Success Public". I focused on the excerpt "*Celebrate project success. Make good news travel fast, and before long there will greater willingness to work in project teams.*" With the public sector this could also mean "*Celebrate project success. Make good news travel fast, and before long there will greater buy in from the public tax payer.*"

So how good a job does the public sector do in celebrating its project success publicly? Not well enough unfortunately, even when actively looking for the success stories, news of project failure can't help but creep in there, raining on the parade. Try searching for "successful public sector projects" in any of the major search engines and see for yourself.

Scratching beneath the surface our research managed to throw up a few good examples (see the listings below for URLs etc) and even better some lessons learnt, examples of best practice, benefits of project delivery and good governance. Success on a selection of public sector projects highlighted common themes:

- Success comes from strong leadership
- Effective, responsive and multi-skilled project teams contribute to success

"Public Demands"

- Engagement of the public through strong communication
- Commitment by the senior management team (especially in resource commitments)
- Thorough business benefits identification at the outset (with clear metrics, methods of measurement)
- The importance of the lessons learnt process and how it feeds back in to the current project as well as others within the organisation
- Clear and consistent strategic direction
- Active backing of senior owners
- Communications with stakeholders
- PMO developing frameworks using principles from methods such as MSP
- Knowledge transfer from consultancies to the project team
- Sharing experiences from other public and private organisations
- Clear objectives linked to strategic priorities
- Robust programme management structure, clear roles and responsibilities, adequate resources and funding

The projects featured all had one thing in common - they weren't monster programmes or projects with many of the complexities that have featured in some of the failed (or failing) public projects in the media to date.

The lessons learnt from the successful projects above are not seen flip sided on the "how projects fail" style articles - weak leadership, weak communication, poor project teams, etc., but I know I would rather read the more positive angle and gain an insight from someone who's been there and done it successfully rather than the view seen from hindsight on the unsuccessful project.

The successful lessons learnt also enables other project managers to follow the path of least resistance when it comes to kicking off their new public funded project. If the new project and previous successful lessons learnt project are similar in nature, even better, would it be too difficult to contact the public department involved to see if the project manager is available for a knowledge transfer session? Enabling leverage from proven successful projects across public departments could only be a positive thing.

Lindsay Scott is Co-Managing Director for [Arras People](#) and blog at [How to Manage a Camel](#).

Project Manager - What do the public expect?



By John Thorpe

As the "Project Manager" becomes more and more omnipresent in the language of the lay men and women of this country I often wonder what they expect of this person and what picture this title paints for them.

Thinking back in time it takes me to the days when the descriptor "engineer" was in vogue; everyone (well not quite) suddenly had engineer appended to their role title. Our plumber became a Heating Engineer, our electrician became an Electrical Engineer; taking them to a new level of gravitas, charge rates and possibly expectation in terms of what they delivered.

Taking the engineer theme further; was this in fact a way for practitioners to start to differentiate themselves from the masses?

'I am not a plumber: I am a specialised Heating Engineer. I have certificates to prove that

From CORGI's web site:

'CORGI was founded in 1970 to protect the public from

links

For more details on Arras People, click [here](#).

You can check out the blog managed by Arras People [here](#).

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my I have taken the courses necessary for my trade; I have the necessary experience to deliver both safely and to an industry recognised standard; I am accredited by a professional body (CORGI) that recognises my skill, knowledge and experience and acts as register for competency.'

the dangers of unsafe gas installations. We are acutely aware that poorly trained tradesmen can give the industry as a whole a bad name and bad experiences can make people extremely wary when it comes to employing someone to install or repair a gas appliance.'

[See the CORGI Website](#)

So back to project management. Are we now at a tipping point where we need to enter a maturity cycle to protect the "Project Manager"? Do we need to take this increase in visibility and clearly set the expectation of what we are, who we are and what we do?

The APM's initiative for Chartered Status is one prong in this maturity cycle, but with an estimated 250,000 people active in the field of project management, I find it hard to see that more than a few percent will achieve (for a variety of reasons) this high status. So what do we do with the rest?

Whilst we have various bodies with a stake in project management such as APM, PMI, OGC and APMG, I fear they all have their own agenda. Do we need our own "CORGI", who will pull together the disparate groups and provide a single body to which project managers can be affiliated? Should this body provide a recognised cross sector standard that takes into account training, development, knowledge, experience and competence?

In summary, again taking the words from Corgi, should our future clients expect project managers to be provided by an umbrella organisation that has a mission statement such as this: "By maintaining an up-to-date register of qualified project managers and other aligned professional people, we set out to promote the core values of professional service and high standards. Consequently, the "xx" badge is now a guarantee of quality, making it the standard to look for when employing a project manager."?

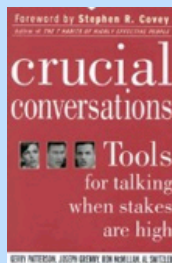
John Thorpe is the Managing Director for [Arras People](#), and blogs at [How to Manage a Camel](#).

Suggested Readings and Links

Edited by Dan Strayer

With each issue of Tipoffs, we endeavour to find some web sites and relevant books for your perusal and study with the month's theme. With public perception of project management as this month's theme, we point you to three books and several web sites that can address the issues surrounding the topic.

TIPOFFS' BOOKS OF THE MONTH



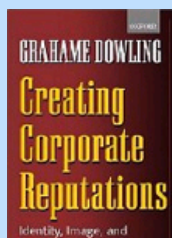
[Crucial Conversations](#)

Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

Synopsis:

"When stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong, you have three choices: avoid a crucial conversation and suffer the consequences; handle the conversation badly and suffer the consequences; or read crucial

conversations and discover how to communicate best when it matters most. This wise and witty guide gives you the tools you need to step up to life's most difficult and important conversations, say what's on your mind, and achieve positive outcomes that will amaze you.." - Available at amazon.co.uk



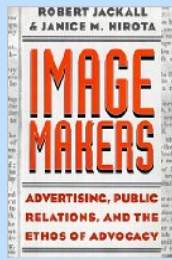
[Creating Corporate Reputations: Identity, Image, and Performance](#)

Grahame Dowling

Reviews:

"Clear writing style and concise arguments ... thought-provoking and extremely readable ... Whether you are a manager, an academic, or

Performance
just an interested general reader, *Creating Corporate Reputations* will offer many new insights into the important role that corporate reputation plays in the success of business. Well written and interesting...Dowling does an excellent job of explaining why managers should spend time and resources to develop the organizational reputation." (Academy of Management Executive) - Available at amazon.co.uk



[Image Makers: Advertising, Public Relations and the Ethos of Advocacy](#)
Robert Jackall & Janice M. Hirota

Customer review: "It is an extremely interesting eye opener about a society that is hooked on images. By breaking down the way in which special interests and political groups use advocacy to promote and legitimize their own agendas and political interests, he exposes a world that makes you realize that much of the what we see and hear in the media are merely images of what advocates want us to see. He does this in a rational investigation of our democratic evolution and not so much an indictment of the advertising and PR disciplines." - A Customer, Amazon.com (Four stars) - Available at amazon.co.uk

TIPOFFS' LINKS OF THE MONTH

[Builderau.com](#) - This IT project management article originates from Australia, but ties in many of the principles surrounding a good public image as a way of enhancing project management perceptions.

[Pells-Expert Advisory Panels - PMForum.org](#) (PDF) - For information that strikes out against lackadaisical upper management that ignores the true impact of project management in the scheme of project management (see page three specifically), you cannot do any better than this paper.

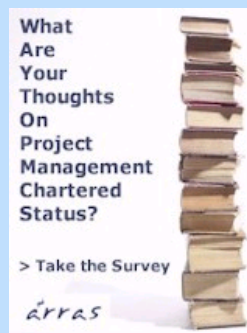
[Computer Weekly article](#) - It's hard to duck the poor public image sometimes in this profession, but this Computer Weekly article delves into its own poll and gets expert opinion on how project management in the IT industry can be improved.

Arras People Update

Edited by Dan Strayer

As mentioned in this space last month (click [here](#) to see last month's e-mail), [Arras People](#) has recently taken a strong interest in the future of Chartered status for Project Management Professionals.

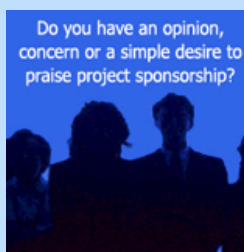
The survey has now closed, and the results justified most of our early suspicions. A full rundown of the results is available at our How to Manage a Camel entry [here](#), (the post refers to an article our own John Thorpe wrote for APM Project Magazine in the Aug/Sept 2008 issue) but some general background information can be revealed in this space.



In all, over 76% of the survey's respondents think that project management professionals need chartered status, while 83% said they planned to apply for chartered status as project managers after the APM's charter application succeeded.

In other news...

- Our survey work doesn't just end with the Chartered Status application enquiries. Arras People acted recently on a letter sent to us by a graduate student hoping to discern more information about project sponsorship. The [survey on Project Sponsorship](#) is still



ongoing, so check in next month for results and other information from this unique poll.

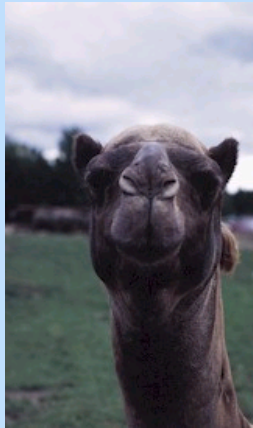
Then take the Arras People Project Sponsorship Survey

- If you wanted to find project management agencies in the UK on Google, and typed in '[project management agencies](#)', you can't do any better than Arras People.
- You are always welcome to check out the continually-updated [job board](#) and also [register](#) to be informed of new opportunities.
- Vacancies on the Arras People job board come from all over the UK, one particular strong area of late has been the Greater London area. For those living in or near this region, have a look at this Project Manager [vacancy for rail & engineering](#). Or [this one in Central London](#).
- It's never too late to brush up on your training, skills, and that trusty ol' CV! If you need advice on your project management career with the added bonus of contributing to one of four newly selected charities, then [book a slot](#) at one of our clinics today.

Project Management Blog

How to Manage a Camel

The blog we at Arras People created is an online gathering spot for professionals in project management. It is a place for project managers, programme managers and other project-related professionals to address issues in this growing sector. We are raising questions and concerns about the field, and it is our hope to continue that trend. But we need something else - you!



Drop by How to Manage a Camel today, and add your comments to existing posts, or simply let us know about your thoughts on the issues surrounding this month's public perception and project management theme. We'd love to hear your stories on public perception and the good stories that never get told about project management.

As always, you are always welcome at the Camel!

> [Visit the blog](#)