



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

Inaugurated 23rd March 1977

MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER

May 2021

June

8th :

**History of the
Postcode – Roa
Stockall**

22nd:

**RAF Court Martials
and Boards of
Enquiry – John
Weeden**



May Diary

Tuesday 11th:



***Why Flying is so safe today – Ron
Jefferies***

Ron is a former airline pilot with many years of flying civilian aircraft. He will talk about how advances in modern technology have made aviation now one of the safest form of public transport. Flying millions of passengers around the globe each day.

Tuesday 25th:



***Understanding heraldry – John
Bromley***

Heraldry is all around us every day: in the town crest, the local church and on architectural features of many buildings. Even in the 21st Century heraldry still relies on its own unique language and so this easy talk looks at the origins of heraldry, the meaning of Coats of Arms and introduces the common colours, divisions and symbols (charges) used. It also looks at common terminology needed to understand and blazon arms: visiting a church or a National Trust house may never be the same again.

***Both talks via Zoom. Please join in good time (between 1015
and 1030) to avoid interrupting the speaker***

Chairman's Chat

I am very pleased to be writing as your new Chairman, and take this opportunity to thank my predecessor Mike on behalf of all of us for his expertise in keeping the Club going so successfully during the chaos of the last 12 months.

My main focus as Chairman, apart from getting us safely back to face to face meetings at Gorsley later this year (albeit subject to you know what), will be to expand our membership. We need to do so for financial reasons to keep the Club viable, and we have a great opportunity to effect this during the coming year. Although we will be targeting residents local to our new hall with a leaflet drop, there must also be a wealth of others living in our general area who would make excellent members.

Your individual help is requested therefore in trying to persuade a friend or acquaintance to join us for a taster meeting (whether by Zoom or at the Hall) with a view to subsequent membership.

Cont.....

So please be active in this regard – successful sponsors can look forward to a bottle of reasonable* wine from myself for every member they introduce. Knowing you as I do, this offer has the chance of doubling membership overnight, but even if it doesn't work that well I shall be very pleased if we get up to 40 or more by the end of my term (that's another 10)!

Let's look forward to a less-troubled year, a return to normality – and a larger membership!

With best wishes

John

*Chairman's decision is final

AGM

25 members attended the AGM - coincidentally the average attendance for all Zoom meetings over the last year. Retiring Chairman Mike thanked the committee for helping to keep things running during this extraordinary year, and Jim's accounts were passed unanimously.

Secretary Fraser thanked all members for maintaining loyalty to the Club in attending virtual meetings and embracing the new technologies, expressing the hope that face-to-face meetings can resume in September. Glevum Probus' Mike Atherton was enormously helpful in the early experiments in Zooming.

Webmaster Ray reported that the club's website is evolving into an increasingly important showcase or shop window for the club (many clubs don't have one at all). Ray is trying to make the site easier to use, and is also considering adding a "widows section" to the protected part of the site.

The club doesn't presently have an almoner, but instead committee members share between them responsibility for keeping in touch with members and dealing with any concerning personal situations flagged up to them.

We then enjoyed video of the Chairmen's handover at Gorsley Village Hall, followed by a tour of the premises, which look so nice that a local pub for post-meeting discussions may almost be superfluous!

New Chairman John Weeden then took over the meeting, allowing us to admire his lawyerly reticence and sartorial elegance. Not sure about the tie though.

He thanked Mike for managing the club and maintaining morale. His priority will be to recruit more members, and a leaflet drop around Gorsley is planned at a suitable time.

Officers were unanimously re-elected en masse. You could hear the sighs of relief across two counties.

The meeting concluded with a predictably lively, engaging and humorous talk from Mike Warburton, recounting two stories, the first of which showed the hypocrisy of the fabled Bob Crow and his RMT entourage living it up at the Corse Lawn while his union was starting a national strike, and the second involving an expensive divorce. Both involved m'learned friends and expensive sueing activity, with very different results. Mike ended by assessing why multinationals like Amazon paid so little UK tax, concluding that the companies are actually paying much more fairly calculated amounts than the press are willing to admit because it doesn't fit the current media agenda. This correspondent's head started hurting when the graphical explanations came up, but he is prepared to take Mike's word for it because he's a pretty straight sort of guy and has a lovely dog. Rather, in fact, like his replacement Chairman who now has twelve equally lovely puppies. And at least one tie.

The meeting concluded with a witty tale from Fraser, entirely coincidentally emphasising the importance of wearing a tie, even in desert climes.

Ed

Poetry Corner

The Castaway

He grabbed me by my slender neck
I could not shout or scream
He carried me into his room
so we would not be seen
He tore away my flimsy wrap
to gaze upon my form
and I was still and cold and damp
and he was wet and warm
He pressed his fevered mouth to mine
I let him have his way
He drained me of my very self
I could not say him nay
He made me what I am alas
as you may see me here
An empty vessel, made of glass
that once held bottled beer



(Blame John Slack not me – Ed)

Pam Street on Ivor Novello

The composer, actor, and playwright Ivor Novello was born in Cardiff in 1893 as David Ivor Davies. His mother Clara Novello Davies was a well-known singing teacher and choral conductor, and in 1927 Ivor took his mother's second name as his surname. She set up as a singing teacher in London, where as a child he met such famous names as singers Clara Butt and Adelina Patti. When he was nine he went to school in Gloucester where he was a pupil of the Cathedral organist, Herbert Brewer, and befriended local musicians Ivor Gurney and Herbert Howells. At the age of eleven he won a scholarship to Magdalen College School in Oxford, where he sang in the College choir. Back in Cardiff he gave piano lessons, and at the age of 20 moved with his mother to London. They had a flat above the Strand Theatre which he kept for the rest of his life. The following year he wrote the music to "Keep the Home Fires Burning" which was a huge success. In 1916 he joined the Royal Naval Air Service as a trainee pilot, but after crashing two planes he was found a desk job at the Admiralty.

During the years following the War he wrote a great many songs and plays, acted in (mostly silent) films, and worked with Alfred Hitchcock. He also spent some time on Broadway and in Hollywood. He became a hugely popular star for the British public, on the strength of which he bought Red Roofs near Maidenhead. This later became a stage school. He was also a friend, and friendly rival, of contemporary actor/composer/playwright, Noel Coward. In 1934 the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, was struggling, and to help save it he wrote the first of an enormously popular and successful series of musicals, "Glamorous Night", starring Mary Ellis. In 1936 there followed "Careless Rapture", starring Dorothy Dickson, in 1937 "Crest of a Wave" with the hugely successful song "Rose of England" almost becoming a second National Anthem, and in 1939 "The Dancing Years" which included the song "Waltz of My Heart".

In 1944 he was unintentionally involved in a fraudulent petrol coupon scheme, and had to serve a month in Wormwood Scrubs. Understandably this had a bad effect on his health, but thankfully not on the affection of his audiences. The following year there was "Perchance to Dream" which included the song "We'll Gather Lilacs". His final musical was "King's Rhapsody" in 1949, with new female lead Vanessa Lee. In deteriorating health, and a heavy smoker, he died in London in 1951 aged 58. His death marked a gap in the tradition of British

musicals which was only revived in a very different style in the 1970s by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Ivor Novello's musicals, with their romance and sentimentality, were very much of their time in providing escapism and boosting morale in this country's darkest times.

The talk included original musical illustrations, in view of their age of variable quality. One gem was "And her mother came too" an early song written for another matinee idol, Jack Buchanan.

Julian Oxley

Lockdown Leisure

My thanks to the very few who contributed to this column; it seems that most members have been in a voluntarily induced coma for the last few months.....

In no particular order.....Andrew and Jenny Graham have been walking between 2 and 4 miles daily, and any leftover energy has been expended on the allotment.....Doreen Brydon has been doing a lot of reading, including the much praised Richard Osman murder club thriller.....the Warburtons have had a His and Hers shed built with clearly delineated and differently furnished sections; Mike has enjoyed DIY and framing Jan's many paintings.....Jim Stewart has moved house (say no more).....Paul Dodd has just about finished his 00 gauge mountain range of wildly improbable geology....Julian Oxley has spent a lot of time writing for the previously moribund Minsterworth village magazine.....and John Slack puts younger members to shame with his relentless gardening, reading, painting in acrylics and watercolours with absolutely no ladders involved.....



Everyone else????

Lou Whitton MBE

Many of our present members may not have met or known Lou, who died on Boxing Day 2020, because during the last four years his declining health and in particular memory have prevented him from playing a full part in Probus. He was a past chairman, contributed to the speaker programme, and usually had searching questions for visiting speakers.

His adult life began on National Service with the army during the Suez crisis. Lou arrived in the back of a lorry that passed through the French lines and in particular their administrative units. These contained many females, who rushed to the windows to evaluate the new arrivals. Lou noticed one in particular and she eventually became his wife and soulmate. Two days later, with his A level in French, he was the obvious choice for a liaison officer to deal with the French. His objection that the A level was in literature made no difference.

After the army, he donned another uniform when he joined the Police Force, eventually finding a run down cottage in the West Country, where Sylvania would soon join him. Eventually he joined the Met, and moved to the completely different environment of London, where gangs and thugs controlled things. He met the Krays and the notorious "axeman", but in Lou's view the worst individual was Jordan, leader of the BNP, who strutted about arrogantly in uniform and considered himself the replacement for Oswald Moseley.

Lou then moved to the Foreign Office and was sent to the West Indies to help modernise their police force. Promotions were keeping up with his growing responsibilities and he was awarded the MBE – "My Bloody Efforts" he said proudly. Eventually he arrived in Gloucestershire as the Deputy Chief Constable. One of his jobs was supervising difficult situations, including one at Bristol University where students had invited Jordan of the BNP to give a talk. A junior PC suggested this took place in a small quadrangle surrounded by walls with only one entrance – but in the event it didn't stop rotten fruit raining down from windows onto the controversial speaker. The PC apologised but Lou thought it had gone rather well.

Lou was a keen golfer, but eventually his hands required operations and golf had to stop. Sylvania of course had French family and the two of them bought an apartment in Marseilles, spending more

time there each year. One day, however, returning from shopping Lou was knocked down by two burglars leaving their apartment; that was the end of their dream and Lou never again seemed the same man.

Lou was brilliant company, never afraid to disagree but retaining his warmth. I sometimes walked with him through Newent after Probus and we would hear "Good morning sir" from the other side of the road – an elderly gent standing to attention. He knew everyone by name. He carried no favours but held no grudges. Both Jan and I were proud to have known him and we will have lasting memories of his wit and kindness, qualities that are often missing in modern life.

Colin Chave

Ex-Chairman's Chat

I have now completed my term as chairman without any physical meetings having taken place. Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties caused by the pandemic, our club has met virtually on a regular basis and we have been able to support each other in the true spirit of fellowship for which Probus is known. This has only been possible through the work of your committee and the high attendance of members in our online meetings. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the committee for their help and support over the year. Thanks are especially due to John W, Ray and Fraser for their research into alternative venues from which we were able to identify Gorsley Village Hall as the location for future meetings once this is possible. Jim has continued to serve us well as treasurer and, in addition, took the lead in setting up our zoom facility which has proved so vital. Our newsletter plays an important role for members to keep in touch and it has been of particular importance. Thanks are due to Paul for his work on this. Ray has maintained and refreshed our website which has been another important link with members. Finally, I would like to thank Fraser for all he has done for us this year in managing the meetings, arranging an excellent programme of speakers and organising the quiz. He has even demonstrated his talents and a film director and his jokes have kept us all amused.

My very best wishes go to John as he takes over as chairman. As the immediate past chairman and I will remain on the committee and will do all I can to support him and the other committee members in the year ahead.

Wishing you all the best

Mike

Some things I learned, now That I'm Older

Don't be worried about your smartphone or TV spying on you. Your vacuum cleaner has been collecting dirt on you for years.

If you can't think of a word say "I forgot the English word for it." That way people will think you're bilingual instead of an idiot.

I'm at a place in my life where errands are starting to count as going out.

I'm getting tired of being part of a major historical event.

I don't always go the extra mile, but when I do it's because I missed my exit.

Ate salad for dinner. Mostly croutons and tomatoes. Really just one big round crouton covered with tomato sauce, and cheese. FINE, it was a pizza.... OK, I ate a pizza! Are you happy now?

I just did a week's worth of cardio after walking into a spider web.

I don't mean to brag, but I finished my 14-day diet food supply in 3 hours and 20 minutes.

A recent study has found women who carry a little extra weight live longer than men who mention it.

Kids today don't know how easy they have it. When I was young, I had to walk 9 feet through shag carpet to change the TV channel.

Senility has been a smooth transition for me.

Remember back when we were kids and every time it was below **freezing** outside they closed school? Yeah, Me neither.

I may not be that funny or athletic or good looking or smart or talented. I forgot where I was going with this.

I love approaching 80, I learn something new every day and forget 5 other things.

A thief broke into my house last night. He started searching for money so I got up and searched with him.

I think I'll just put an "Out of Order" sticker on my forehead and call it a day.

Just remember, once you're over the hill you begin to pick up speed.

It's weird being the same age as old people.

When I was a kid I wanted to be older...this is not what I expected.

Life is like a helicopter. I don't know how to operate a helicopter.

It's probably my age that tricks people into thinking I'm an adult.

Marriage Counsellor: Your wife says you never buy her flowers. Is that true? **Me** : To be honest, I never knew she sold flowers.

Never sing in the shower! Singing leads to dancing, dancing leads to slipping, and slipping leads to paramedics seeing you naked. So remember...Don't sing!

I see people about my age mountain climbing; I feel good getting my leg through my underwear without losing my balance.

I'm at that age where my mind still thinks I'm 29, my humour suggests I'm 12, while my body mostly keeps asking if I'm sure I'm not dead yet.

You don't realize how old you are until you sit on the floor and then try to get back up.

We all get heavier as we get older, because there's a lot more information in our heads. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

How we blocked people in the 1980s

