



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

AGM 27th April 2021

1. **Chairman:** Following the recently reported death of former chairman Louis Whitton Mike asked members to observe a minute's silence.
2. **Members present:** Mike Warburton, John Weeden, Jim Stewart, Fraser Gunn, David Clowes, Andrew Graham, John Martin, Ray McCairn, Roger Beard, Richard Crisp, Peter Hayes, Peter Hines, John Oakman, Michael Keane, Fred Passant, Fred Bach, Jack Porteous, Paul Dodd, Mike Townsend, Gareth Williams, John Slack, John Atkinson, Michael Bennett, Graham Jackson, Terry Finch.
3. **Apologies.** John Franklin, Julian Oxley, David Bywater.
4. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 21st April 2020 (previously displayed on website) were accepted as a true record and duly signed.
5. **Matters arising.** None
6. **Officer Reports**

5.1. Chairman's report:

Report from the retiring chairman

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 as 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, 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

5.2. Treasurer's report:

Jim said that the accounts for the next financial year had been circulated to all members and asked if there were any questions. There were not any and he asked that the accounts be approved. The Chairman asked for a show of hands. The accounts were accepted unanimously by all present.

5.3. Secretary/ Speaker Secretary report:

This last year has been the most challenging time as club speaker secretary. When we went into lockdown, we had to cancel all the speakers that had been planned. We had no idea as to when we would be able to resume our meetings. The committee trialled holding meetings via Skype, which were not particularly successful, then we found ZOOM, thanks to the assistance of Jim. However, we didn't realise that we would be able to use it for our speakers. With the assistance of Mike Aggleton from Glevum Probus who had developed its use for their meetings, we decided to see whether it would work for us. It has turned out to be a huge success, we have been fortunate to find a large speaker base who were able to adapt their talks for use via Zoom. Obviously, it's different as there is no direct contact, but it has worked. What has surprised me and the committee, is how many members have embraced the technology and made our meetings such a huge success and maintained our club ethos of comradeship. We have averaged 24 members per meeting plus several guests. As a bonus, our partners have also enjoyed quite a few of our talks.

We have really have led the way with the use of Zoom and as a result several other clubs have joined us to see how we operated and taken it back to their own clubs. Some of our members even attended a talk from Toronto University. We are all looking forward to getting back to normal and especially excited to meet at our new venue at Gorsley Village Hall.

With our experience in the use of virtual presentation, we will be investigating the possibility of having virtual presentations beamed to the hall, this will enable us to increase our speaker base considerably.

I hope the programme for the rest of the year will be enjoyed by all. Just to remind you that I am Temporary Speaker Secretary, if there is anyone out there who would like to have a go at the role, please don't hesitate to contact me.

5.4. Webmaster: Ray McCairn outlined the work carried out on the club website

NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB WEBSITE has evolved over nearly a decade primarily, though unintentionally, as a digital reference for members. It has been recognised that the club website should also promote the membership.

We were challenged with creating a noticeable “Shop Window” to our website that needed to be both appealing and informative to a wider audience.


A new Theme was installed that changed the appearance and feel of the old website. This template introduced contemporary graphics, editable information and images with user friendly navigation.

UPDATES: The HOME PAGE has pictures of local relevance and clear messages: Who are we? What do we do? Where do we meet? and welcoming visitors to Join Us. It illustrates Testimonials, Club statistics, News and forthcoming meetings


The EVENTS Page was rebuilt to illustrate the diverse interests and activities of members: adding images of talks, topics and travels [what we do when able] with a real time calendar and events planner.

The ABOUT US: A page reporting on the inaugural meeting was added.


Newent & District Probus Club



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The Club was inaugurated on 23rd March 1977



Newent Probus Club Formed 1977

A meeting was held on Wednesday 23 March 1977 at the George Hotel, Newent, Gloucestershire, England to inaugurate the Newent Probus Club.

Present: Mr O.B. Trick together with the Chairman and Treasurer of the Gloucester Probus Club who gave a short talk on the formation of a club on similar lines to their own. Messrs: J. D. Griffiths, J. Miller, Dr M. G. Robinson, G. H. Blundy, G. Perillo, J. N. Smith, E. Andrews, F. B. Barber, A. Mathews, H. T. Woodhouse, H. S. Jenkinson, P. Titley, G. A. Roberts, R. Ovington.

On a proposal from Mr Andrews, seconded by Dr Robinson, it was agreed that a Probus Club be formed in Newent. The meetings will be held once a fortnight and would be held at the George Hotel, Newent on Tuesdays at 10.30 a.m. The following officers were elected: Chairman Mr J. D. Griffiths; Vice Chairman Dr M. G. Robinson; Treasurer Mr J. Miller; Secretary Mr E. Andrews. Mr Andrews to act as Programme Secretary for the time being.

It was agreed that membership would be restricted to 30. Subscriptions: £2 per year. Coffee and biscuits would be served at meetings at a charge of 30p per member. The next meeting was arranged for Tuesday 5 April 1977

The MEMBERS ONLY page is password protected, thus not accessible by the public. Minutes and accounts are regularly updated for members to scrutinise.

SUMMARY

The annual cost of the website at about £3 per member and offers good value, A total of £165 of which £150 is the cost of the internet web host BLUEHOST, recommended by WordPress the software system we use. Cheap introductory offers from other web hosts are tempting, but the saving is temporary and usually tied with longer contracts. Bluehost excels in most reviews and I recommend that we continue to subscribe to their package most suited to the club website.

Ray said that he is happy to continue as webmaster and would welcome any positive feedback.

5.5. Technical Support Team report:

Team Members - Richard Crisp, John Franklin & Ray McCairn.

The planned move to Gorsley Village Hall [GVH] has required the Technical Support Team [TST] to examine the existing fixed audio/visual [A/V] facilities in the hall and assess how to interconnect these to the Club's equipment. All our equipment has been collected from Newent Memorial Hall.

GVH has an overhead projector [onto a large roll down screen], multi-channel amplifier, multiple speakers and assorted fixed cabling linking these units. However, there is no Broadband at GVH.

Covid lockdown has prevented further visits to GVH to complete the examination and testing of the A/V system. The actual connectivity and requirement for any additional equipment needs to be established prior to any "LIVE" meetings in the new venue.

For a "normal" meeting, the club's laptop and radio microphones would need connection to the fixed facilities; the latter will require a new multi-channel mixer unit, which is now on order.

When the tests have been successfully completed, we hope to trial the JW portable WiFi/Broadband unit, for any future Zoom speakers we may have after we are back to normal meetings.

In all, the reconfigured A/V system should provide members with a good audio/visual experience in an acoustically superior space.

6. Appointment of New Chairman – John Weeden

Fraser presented a video of the official handover between Chairman Mike Warburton and chairman elect John Weeden. This was followed by a short video of the facilities that Gorsley Village Hall offers to us.

New Chairman: John Weeden

John thanked Mike for handing over the Chairman's badge of office. And in particular for his chairmanship over the last 12 months, the most extraordinary 12 months in Probus history. He ensured that we kept going, with a bit of help from Mike Aggleton from Glevum Probus in Gloucester. He got us up and running using Skype to start with and then Zoom, well before the majority of Probus clubs. He predicted that we would be back to normal in October, but unfortunately the wrong October! But that didn't matter as our systems were in place and our meetings carried on. He said that Mike greeted us cheerily each time, pretending the books behind him were real but he did a lot for the morale of the club, which has been sustained by the Zoom meetings despite everything. It was truly sad that he never chaired a meeting in the flesh or even with his clothes on. It meant he missed out on leading us to Pubs, Theatres or

wherever. Hopefully he will come back as Chairman in the not-too-distant future. So, Mike Thank you.

Just a bit about me for those of you who don't know. I have been a Solicitor for 50 years, 28 years in the RAF as a Legal Officer, ending up as the Boss, as an Air Vice Marshall. Then I had 10 years dealing with Miscarriages of Justice with the Criminal Cases Review Commission, and then chairing Disciplinary Panels for Nurses and Midwives.

I am very honoured to take on the role of Chair. I know most of you pretty well but a handful of us have not spoken very much and I was denied the opportunity in lockdown to get to know you, my apologies for that. However, amends will be made when we can meet in person again at Gorsley Village Hall. I do hope that this is only a few months away, but I acknowledge entirely that it will be an individual decision by each of you as to when you feel it is safe to attend. We shall certainly not rush in to holding live meetings. If all continues to go well, we may be able to meet, with appropriate caution, toward the end of the year. Your committee will obviously keep in touch about live meetings and we will monitor progress. Talking of committee, I wish to thank the committee and associated appointees for staying on so loyally – it can only get better, although we are looking for a Pub Lunch organiser if anyone would like to volunteer.

Finally, other than trying to reintroduce live meetings, my main challenge is to bring in new members. Our numbers are falling and another 5 or 10 members would make a big difference. I need your help please in, in approaching any suitable friends, and getting them along on Zoom or in person when allowed for a free session. We also hope that we can encourage a few Gorsley and Kilcot residents to join in when we start at the village hall. So please, let's make this a year of recruitment.

7. Election of Club Officers:

Our new chairman John Weeden then presented the list of proposed officials for the coming year. He said that he was pleased that existing members had agreed to stand again. He asked if there were any other nominees. There being none, he asked for a proposer for these nominations. Proposed by Fred Bach, seconded by Peter Hines. Members voted unanimously for the committee and associated positions

Vice Chairman: Andrew Graham

Secretary: Fraser Gunn

Treasurer: Jim Stewart

COMMITTEE:

Past Chairman: Mike Warburton

Programme Secretary: Fraser Gunn

Webmaster: Ray McCairn

Theatre Trips: Andrew Graham

Outings: David Clowes

Pub Lunches: Mike Warburton

Christmas/Spring Lunches: John Martin

ASSOCIATED APPOINTMENTS:

Newsletter: Paul Dodd

Technical Support: Richard Crisp/ John Franklin

Assistant Treasurer: Mike Warburton

Raffle Organiser: Brian Parker

- 7. Speaker:** Mike Warburton revealed some sordid facts about the activities of Bob Crowe, the leader of the RMT Union, displaying amazing double standards. During a threatened national rail strike asking for more money and pensions, he was found to be spending thousands of Union funds on wining and dining. When it was reported in the media, he demanded they retract the damning reports. Living in a dream world. He also discussed an unusual divorce, again depicting deceit and double standards. He finished with a real insight in the taxation of multi- national digital companies, much maligned by the media, unfairly it transpires.
A very interesting presentation in Mike's usual inimitable manner and well researched.
- 8. AOB:** The meeting concluded with Fraser's usual amusing story
- 9. Date of next AGM:** 26.04.2022
- 10. Date of next Club meeting:** 11 MAY 2021 @ 10.30
- 11. Speaker:** Ron Jeffries – Why flying is so safe today