



## NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

Inaugurated 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1977

### MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 2021

## Looking Ahead

December 14<sup>th</sup>

### Christmas Lunch at Speech House

Fraser is in the throes of putting the speaker programme together for 2022/23.

In trying to get a balance of speakers that will suit most of us, if you have any particular genre you would like to be included or if you know of any speakers who you think would be interesting, please let him know.

As you know we like to have some home-grown speakers as well. There is a wealth of knowledge amongst members, be it work related or Hobbies. Fraser feels sure there is a good talk in you.

If so, get in touch with him. There are plenty of dates available!

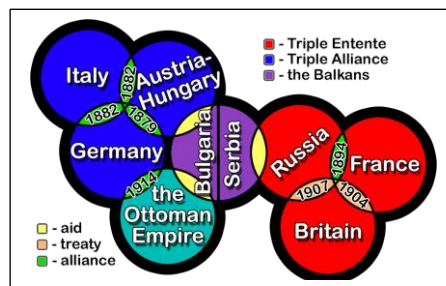
## November Diary



### 9<sup>th</sup>: 1300 Years of Gloucester Cathedral – Peter Petrie

Peter has been a guide at Gloucester Cathedral for some 16 years. He will attempt to convey his enthusiasm for the Cathedral by compressing the highs and lows of the history of this fantastic building of a mere 1300 years into a short highly illustrated talk.

### 16<sup>th</sup>: Pub lunch at the White Hart, Broadoak, 1245



### 23<sup>rd</sup> : Causes of the First World War – John Gove

Germany was not the sole guilty party! Each nation involved had been preparing for war for the previous 10 years, and the Austrian – Serbian quarrel just provided the starting gun for this terrible conflict.

## From the Chairman

Your Committee has been very pleased with the new venue in Gorsley Village Hall. It is working well as a much more pleasant space to meet than previously, with sufficient parking and all the facilities we need. The acoustics are also much better. I hope you agree that it is a far superior venue.

Following many hours work over the last two months our valiant Tech Team have not only improved the Hall's own sound system but have been able to Zoom broadcast our presentations to those of you who have not attended in person for whatever reason. The best reason so far has been that Paul Dodd was in the Arctic Circle, but he still enjoyed last Tuesday's talk live! Amazing really when you think about it.

We continue to take practical steps at the Hall to minimise the risks regarding Covid, and we monitor the local situation. If we judge the risks are too great we will let you know in advance and endeavour to have the meeting only by Zoom. However we hope very much to continue our live meetings (with the Zoom option) where all attendees in person must take a lateral flow test which is negative, preferably on the morning of the meeting. We continue to wear masks except when sitting down or drinking, and we ensure decent ventilation. Let us hope that in December we are able to enjoy our Xmas lunch as planned.

We are also delighted to welcome a number of new members – let's hope the facemasks don't make it too difficult for them to get to know us!!

Finally, a date for your diaries in November – on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> we are planning a pub lunch, the first since the pandemic began. It will be 1215 for 1245 ish at The White Hart in Broadoak (just north of Newnham on the river).

We will have a room to ourselves. Menus and booking forms to follow.

Best wishes,

John

## What's in a Place Name?

Have you ever wondered why your home town or present place of residence is so named? As a Gloucester girl I grew up knowing that the name derived from Caer Glou, gleaming place with a fort and the suffix -cester indicated, as we all know, a Roman fort. Not that there is much gleaming about Gloucester these days, but then Birmingham shows little sign of being low-lying farmland.

All this and more was covered by Lee Hines in a wide ranging talk across the origins of place names and their derivations from languages as diverse as Welsh, the Mercian dialect of Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and even a tiny glimpse, did I hear, of Norse, because if Blakeney is the black island, then surely the -ey suffix is related to the -ay or -øy suffix, also meaning island, that we see all over the Scottish islands.

We should spare a thought, as Lee pointed out, for residents of Ugley and Shitterton, and do residents of Great Snoring ever get a decent night's sleep? As for that Welsh place with the long name? A 19<sup>th</sup> century publicity stunt to ensure it had the longest name of any railway station in Britain.

*Jonquil Dodd*

## Are We Alone in the Universe? – David Terry

Interstellar intercourse was not what the assembled audience were expecting to be the opening gambit of David's talk. It certainly kept our attention as we were told the true story of Antonio Boas from NE Brazil. In October 1957, Antonio reported that whilst working his fields one evening, he had been abducted by aliens, taken aboard their spacecraft and subjected to medical probing. This was followed by an encounter with a female of their species, who indicated her willingness for 'hanky panky'. This became possibly one of the best documented cases of alien abduction. It was said that as he was a law student, he had to be telling the truth and he stood by his story for over 30 years.

David acknowledged that there is a vast AtoZ of subject information available on the internet and by giving the letter A as an example, quoted the Aetherius Society. Dr King of this society, believes that extraterrestrial beings have been visiting Earth for millennia but they are benevolent or could be termed "Gods", so we have nothing to worry about. Their spacecraft are described in the Bible but not in terms that we would recognise as such.

The Drake equation was formulated by Dr Frank Drake and is used to estimate the number of possible extraterrestrial civilisations in the Milky Way. Up until the 1920's, astronomy was based

based upon the work of Galileo. That all changed when Edwin Hubble, after whom the Hubble Space Telescope is named, discovered countless galaxies exist beyond our own galaxy. David estimated that there are 2 trillion galaxies and 2 billion stars in our galaxy. The difficulty with the current telescope is that only a very small area of space can be viewed at a time. There is, however, a new telescope which is due to be operational in 18 months. This was confirmed during questions as TESS, the Transitory Exoplanet Survey Satellite.

Astronomers have to make a number of assumptions, such as the known laws of physics apply equally throughout the Universe and that Dark energy is the force that is accelerating the rate of expansion of the Universe. However, similar to Darwin's theory of evolution, these are only theories. This is expanded upon by Nick Lane from University College London in his recent book *The Vital Question*, which serves to highlight the astronomical odds of the probability of life happening. For two and half billion years, from the very origins of life, single-celled organisms such as bacteria evolved without changing their basic form, then on just one occasion they made the jump to complexity.

The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) are working on the assumption that if life is detected, then it might evolve into intelligent life. There are many imponderables. If there are extraterrestrials, where will they be? Where is the best place to search for them? Would we wish to make contact anyway? What benefit would there be if we found life?

I wonder why we are so obsessed with finding intelligent life on other planets, when we can't even find intelligent life in this planet.



David was firmly of the opinion that we are alone in the Universe and therefore we should not be looking elsewhere. He feels that expenditure in this field is a waste of money, which could be put to better use. He is also in agreement with Prince William's recent comment on near earth research.

An absorbing, informative and thought provoking talk on a complex subject, delivered without notes or slides.

*Chris Johnson*



## New members

As a chartered Electrical Engineer I spent 30 years working in the Mining, Petrochemical and Pharmaceutical industries. I worked mostly in the UK with some time in Zambia and Saudi Arabia. After volunteering for redundancy in 2006 we moved to Hillersland near Symonds Yat running a B&B for 10 years then changing that to Self catering accommodation for a further 3 years. In May 2020 we downsized to a barn conversion at Aston Crews to enjoy retirement with my Wife and two Dogs and I am starting to project manage my retirement!

Chris Lathan

## LEXOPHILIA? WHO ON EARTH DREAMS THESE UP? A lexophile of course! Part 2

When chemists die, they barium.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.

I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.

Why were the Indians here first. They had reservations.

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

Did you hear about the cross-eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?

When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

Broken pencils are pointless.

What do you call a dinosaur with an extensive vocabulary? A thesaurus.

I dropped out of communism class because of terrible Marx.

I got a job at a bakery because I kneaded dough.

Velcro - what a rip off!

**Q**

When I read about the evils of drinking, I gave up reading." - Henry Youngman

## abridged classics



Everyone is sad.  
It snows.



Farming sucks.  
Road trip!  
Road trip sucks.



Guy attacks windmills.  
Also, he's mad.



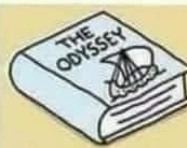
Lost generation gets drunk.  
They're still lost.



Man vs. whale.  
Whale wins.



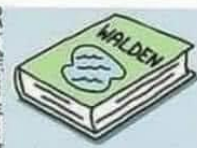
Dublin, something, something, something, run-on sentence.



War veteran takes forever to get home then kills everyone.



A sort-of brother and sister fall in love. It's foggy.



Man sits outside for two years. Nothing happens.



Murderer feels bad. Confesses. Goes to jail. Feels better.



Hero kills monster. Blah, blah, blah, blah. Dragon kills Hero.



All hell breaks loose.

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**Masks are apparently the new bra... They're uncomfortable, you only wear them in public, and when you don't wear one everyone notices.**

**The irony for mankind is that a computer program asks a human to prove that they're not a robot.**

<b>PROBUS Christmas Lunch – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021</b>	
<b>Sprout and Chestnut Soup (v)</b>	<b>S1</b>
Smoked Brioche Croutons	
<b>Honey Roast Ham Hock Terrine</b>	<b>S2</b>
Ale Chutney · Sour Dough	
<b>Severn And Wye Smoked Salmon</b>	<b>S3</b>
Spiced Pear and Fennel Salsa · Black Garlic Mayonnaise	
<b>Deep Fried Goats Cheese (v)</b>	<b>S4</b>
Pickled Red Onion · Smoked Cranberry Compote	
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<b>Traditional Roast Turkey</b>	<b>M1</b>
Served with all the trimmings	
<b>Dry Cured Pork Chop</b>	<b>M2</b>
Roast Garlic Mash · Root Vegetables · Baked Apple	
<b>Herb Crusted Cod Loin</b>	<b>M3</b>
Leek · Potato · Chive	
<b>Stilton Glazed Celeriac (v)</b>	<b>M4</b>
Roast Broccoli · Pickled Walnuts · Celery Shoots	
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<b>Traditional Christmas Pudding (v)</b>	<b>D1</b>
Brandy Crème Anglaise	
<b>Mulled Berry Panna Cotta</b>	<b>D2</b>
Liquorice Cream · Brown Butter Oat Clusters	
<b>Warm Chocolate Brownie (v)</b>	<b>D3</b>
Salted Caramel Sauce · Clotted Cream Ice Cream	
<b>A Selection of Local Cheese (£2.50 supplement)</b>	<b>D4</b>
Winter Chutney · Crackers · Grapes and Celery	
<b>Tea, Coffee and Mince Pies</b>	

Thank you for your prompt replies with menu choices. I can now report that since the last newsletter, the number attending has risen to 51 which is very nearly a record so I have been able to book the Edwin Talbot Suite at the Speech House. As this is a larger function room, it will be more comfortable by giving us more space. I am now able to extend the deadline for bookings, so if anybody else wishes to attend, can you please let me have names and menu choices, by email if possible by **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November** to [johnandjillmartin@btinternet.com](mailto:johnandjillmartin@btinternet.com).

For convenience, I have annotated the menu with a simple code so that all I need are the relevant codes to identify your choices. If you are unable to let me know by email, a phone call or answerphone message to 01452 760109 will suffice, but email will be preferred. I'm looking forward to receiving any further replies and a good turnout.

The cost of the Lunch will be £32.50 per person, and Treasurer Mike will be in contact in the near future to relieve you of some of the money you have saved by not going on expensive holidays during lockdown. *Please note that The Speech House requests that all guests wear face masks while walking about in the 'public' parts of the hotel. Additionally, and in accordance with our now established practice for attending regular PROBUS meetings, we ask that everyone attending the lunch takes a Lateral Flow Test before attending.*

John Martin