

NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

Inaugurated 23rd March 1977

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

February 2022

Looking Ahead: March

1st

**Pub Lunch at the
Weston Cross
(see p5)**

8th

**My Life Story – How to
Write an Autobiography –
Charlotte Goodworth**

22nd

**Gloucestershire's Blue
Plaque Holders – Nigel
Thompson**

July 26th

Summer Party



February Diary



February 8th

**Robert Arley - Mapping Motorways -
creating the M4, M5 & M6.**

Preview notes unavailable, but see

<https://robertarley.com/motorway-sights-guide/>



February 22nd

**Ian Caskie - SS Great Britain - Launch
to re-Launch.**



In building *SS Great Britain*, the second of his three great ships, Brunel successfully combined and adapted the very best of cutting-edge technologies to create the world's first transatlantic liner – a true wonder of the Victorian age.

This illustrated talk by Brunel's *SS Great Britain* guide and volunteer, Ian Caskie, tells the ship's remarkable story from her original design through the different phases of her working life. It describes her incredible salvage and return to Bristol in 1970, and finally her restoration, preservation, and 're-launch' as a multi-award-winning museum of international renown.

Miscellany

January's meetings were held over Zoom because of the resurgence of Covid risk. Because of this also the planned Welcome Meeting has been postponed until the summer, and no outings or theatre trips are planned in the near future, although David and Andrew both warned that such activities are going to be significantly more expensive when they do eventually resume, because of higher prices of admission, transport costs etc.

Mike has spoken about the club's deficit, entirely caused by the decision to offer free drinks at the Christmas lunch. Although this went down extremely well with everyone (*hic*) it is unaffordable without an unacceptable rise in the basic price of the event.

Meetings in February will be "normal", i.e. held at Gorsley, with strict conditions attached for attendance.

Extra special, hearty congratulations to Terry, who is now the group's second nonagenarian!



ALF LAWRENCE

Although Alf, who passed away at Christmas time, was only a member for the relatively short time of three years, during that time he made many friends and was an enthusiastic supporter of club activities. As the head of personnel at one of the UK's largest local authorities, the former West Midlands Metropolitan Authority, based in Birmingham, with upwards of several thousand employees, he had held down a demanding job, not only from having to administer to all those humans but one that was subject to the vicissitudes of politicians and politics. It was his retirement from this that brought him to Gloucestershire, where he had many connections. Born in Cheshire and a keen sportsman all his life, Alf had played football semi professionally for the Football League club, Tranmere Rovers and he was at least a county standard tennis player. When that proved too much for him, he took up golf, achieving low handicap status early on. With his wife Audrey, they were both keen horse riders.

Alf enjoyed the social part of Probus club life and looked forward to our regular pub lunches while he would always be one of the first to put his name down for outings and theatre visits.

As it does to all of us, old age took its toll in Alf's later years and it was with great regret that he resigned from the club but he kept in touch with a few of us, always interested to learn of our doings. We send our condolences to his wife Audrey daughter Christine and son David

Peter Hayes

Flight Officer Robert "David" Ackers

Phil Bevan adapted his well-researched talk about Flight Officer Robert 'David' Ackers at short notice, into a Zoom presentation.

Club members are grateful that Phil persevered with his armchair offering that elaborated on the family background of David, as he was known, and the local history of the Huntley Manor. His Father Charles Penrhyn was born at Prinknash Abbey near Cheltenham. We were treated to images of the stained-glass windows from the abbey that have been installed at Gloucester Cathedral. His mother Dorothy Jane was born in India. Her family were very well connected in diplomatic and aristocratic circles both at home and abroad. The earliest photo show her posing alongside her grandfather with courtiers of the Indian Raj. During the war she became the driver for De Gaulle, receiving the Croix for her taxing duties.

Sadly, she was wounded during the Blitz and died in 1943. Charles Ackers in his 40's married Dorothy aged 19 (fittingly described as a 'pretty bird'] for land and love, a bond that lasted.

David was born in 1923 having a happy childhood at the family home and surrounding woodlands around May Hill, part of Huntley Manor Estate. However, at the age of 8 he was sent away to boarding school, as was typical for educating the sons of privileged classes. He was boarded at West End School near Guildford in preparation for Eton. He was friends with the sons of titled and landed families, portrayed in school photos and appearing as a page boy at an aristocratic wedding. At his graduation from Eton in 1937, he poses in traditional uniform complete with top hat, with a gathering of gentry in the background. David had no "airs and graces" enjoying his free lifestyle tours around the Forest and beyond in his MG Sports Car, returning to Huntley Manor for high tea. Soon, the calm and relaxed living descended into preparation for war.

David volunteered to join the RAF at Oxford, then on to RAF Northampton for flight training where he earned his wings. He was drafted to Calgary, Canada for Air Service Training. He was trained to fly various North American aircraft the HARVARD Trainer; Boeing STEARMAN- bi-plane; and the twin engine. DE_HAVILLAND. He transferred to the newly built training facility at Bagotville, Quebec for fighter training, flying the Hawker HURRICANE that was then flown by his future squadron. In one exercise he fires 2,500 canon rounds, obviously having learnt the American way of 'Let them have it'. He graduated from the Air Service training with the accolade 'No Bad Habits'.



On returning to Britain, he was posted to Scotland for advanced fighter training in the new Miles MASTER, a superior tandem fighter trainer, that could match the characteristics of front-line fighters that David was destined to fly. David joined the 183 squadron prior to 'D' Day. The squadron photos show a band of pilots all in their 20's. The only noticeable character is squadron leader Scarlett sporting a typical fighter pilot's handle bar moustache: he was 26 years old.

183 squadron now flew the Hawker "Typhoo" (not everyone's cup of tea) tactically a fighter bomber.

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The TYPHOON was a 7-ton beast powered by a robust Napier engine, armed with 8 rockets and twin firing cannons. Phil was allowed to borrow one from the wreckage of a Typhoon that crashed near Taynton, however its dead weight defeated any attempt to lift.

183 squadron flew many missions over northern France, attacking radar installations and 'V' bomb launch sites. These were dangerous sorties; their squadron leader Scarlett was killed in one raid, as were many others. On 18th August 1944, during a mission over Normandy, David's Typhoon encountered anti-aircraft fire, he climbed away steeply, stalling, and crashed. A tragic end for any 21 year old. His grave lies in the churchyard at Ocagnes with the epitaph:

WELL CONTENT TO FOLLOW HIS MOTHER
WHO ALSO MADE THE SUPREME
SACRIFICE ... December 1943. We can only
imagine the feeling of loss for the family so
soon after her death. The memorial cathedral
of trees on May Hill is seen only by those with
wings.

Ray McCairn

RIP Barry Cryer

The man who swallowed liquid Tipp-Ex instead of Viagra – he woke up with a massive correction!"

There's a priest in the confessional box and someone comes in and sits down behind the screen. After a couple of minutes the person still hasn't said anything so the priest knocks on the side of the confessional. There's no response, so a minute later he knocks again and a bloke's voice says 'You can knock all you like, there's no paper in here either.'"

'A man and his wife are out walking one day when they spot a lone fellow on the other side of the road. 'That looks like the Archbishop of Canterbury over there,' says the woman.

'Go and see if it is,' she adds.

'The husband crosses the road and asks the man if he is indeed the Archbishop of Canterbury.

'Fk off,' says the man.**

The husband crosses back to his wife who asks 'What did he say? Is he the Archbishop of Canterbury?'

"He told me to f off," says the husband.**

'Oh no,' replies the wife, 'Now we'll never know'.

Barry's 'ultimate' parrot joke tells the story of a woman who bought a parrot for just £5.

'Well, I must confess, it was brought up in a brothel,' says the shopkeeper. 'And, to put it politely, it has quite an extensive vocabulary.'

'Never mind,' says the woman. 'At that price, I'll take it.'

So she takes the parrot home, puts its cage in the living room and takes the cover off.

'New place – very nice,' says the parrot.

Then the woman's two daughters walk in.

'New place, new girls – very nice,' says the parrot.

Then the woman's husband walks in, and the parrot says, 'Oh hello, Keith!'

New Member: Graham Baum

I was born in Birmingham in 1940. Adolf Hitler decided he didn't like us so decided to bomb our house, which meant we had to move in with my aunt in Belbroughton in north Worcestershire. I went to school there and returned to Birmingham in 1946.

There's nothing spectacular about my childhood! I trained as a Chartered Public Finance accountant with the Treasurer of the city of Birmingham. After qualifying, I was employed by various local authorities, moving to Gloucestershire County Council as Deputy County Treasurer in 1974.

I built a house in Redmarley and have a long suffering wife, two children and grandchildren. I liked the area so much I decided to stay. I resigned from the County Council in 1990, as working with a hung council became frustrating. After sitting in a budget meeting until the early hours without a decision, decided to set up my own company. This quickly became a practice which was mainly a software house, selling our own costing software to hospitals. Soon half the hospitals in the country had our software but working very long hours prompted me to retire at 63.

Since then I've been mainly involved in sport. I qualified as a L.T.A Tennis coach about 1978 and have acted as a coach for several clubs in the area including acting as coach for Gloucester city operating from Oxstalls centre. I still do coaching sessions for my village club and play, but less frequently. I also developed a liking for Golf which I took up at 65 knowing I could never develop a handicap of note. I'm currently playing at South Herefordshire club.

I'm also a keen supporter of Aston Villa, having lived close as a youngster. A final fact is that I went to school with another Probus member, Brian Parker, who is an even more of a fanatical supporter!

Fracking and Shale Gas production

Piet Veizeboer introduced himself as a retired mining engineer who worked with 'Shell' internationally. In starting his talk he emphasised that fracking in the UK was very different than in the USA for reasons explained later on in the talk. He then showed a video explaining the process of fracking.

The video showed that fracking holes are drilled up to a mile below the surface; this means they are significantly below the fresh water aquifers. The holes are lined with steel casings which are further protected by a cement outer casing ensuring that there are no leaks between the pipe and the surrounding geology including the aquifers. As it achieves its designated depth the drill changes from vertical to horizontal for up to 5 kilometres. Small amount of explosives are then placed at intervals along the horizontal length of the casing to create the fracture together with a mixture of water sand and chemicals used to hydraulically fracture the surrounding geology and release the gas.

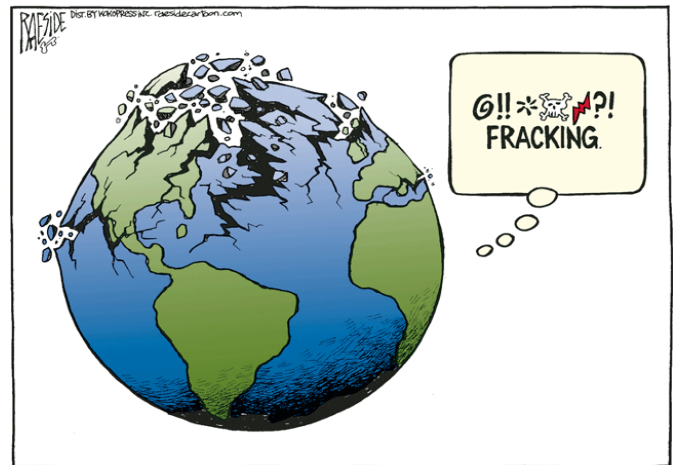
This horizontal drilling and fracking allows gas to be taken from several points in the casing rather than just one when vertical. This method was developed by BP in the 1990's and is enabled by the development of advanced telemetry which allows an accurate drill location to be monitored. Fracking started in the USA in the 1940's with the North Sea fracking starting in the 1970's. He then showed us a picture of the ultimate frack, the aftermath of an underground nuclear explosion, however he was not suggesting this for commercial use.

We were then introduced to several important things to be considered when considering fracking locations:

Seismicity - We were shown several maps indicating seismic activity in the UK with the earliest recordings going back to 1870. Some were due to abandoned coal mine collapses and some to minor earthquakes. Although we were assured that while the devastating earthquake in Christchurch New Zealand was a 6 on the scale, in the UK the maximum has been between 3 and 4, apparently just a window rattling experience.

Fluids – The fluid use for hydraulic fracking is mainly water and sand although a small percentage of chemicals are used to aid fluidity, including the same gum as used in Jelly babies! It was emphasised that the risk to aquifers was low due to the double casing of the pipe and that the fracking is taking place some distance below them. The casings are also monitored and tested annually.

Environmental – These include noise, seismic events, possible accidents and disposal of fracking fluid. Population density is another factor as the UK population density is more than 5 time more than the density of the most populous areas of the USA. We then moved on to development. The development, infrastructure and production of gas is still currently more cost effective than solar or wind power although the gap is narrowing. However we are not still sure of how much fracking gas we have in reserve. Availability of sites is also limited due to population density. There is also competition from imports. In the USA land ownership extends to the minerals underneath it, unlike the UK, so land owners in the USA have embraced it.



There is potential, word wide, for large reserves of shale gas to be harvested. Surveys have shown that there are large reserves in North Africa and South America and high oil prices may make the exploration of shale gas viable in those areas. In conclusion, the UK reserves have not yet been demonstrated, drilling costs will be expensive due to availability of sites and population density, land owners will not benefit in the UK and current oil prices are low compared to shale gas.

Questions were then asked including the use of redundant North Sea oil rigs for fracking and the two year pause of fracking in the UK. The speaker was then thanked and the session ended.

John Franklin

"I've finally reached The Wonder Years"

Wonder where
I parked the car?

Wonder where
I left my phone?

Wonder where
my glasses are?

Wonder what
day it is?

Pub Lunch

The first Pub Lunch of 2022 will be on Tuesday, 1st March at **The Weston Cross Inn** at Weston-under-Penyard, HR9 7NU. This large family-run pub is conveniently situated on the A40 about 2 miles before Ross and has a spacious car park. Please aim to arrive between 12.15 and 12.45 and they will aim to serve lunch around 1pm.

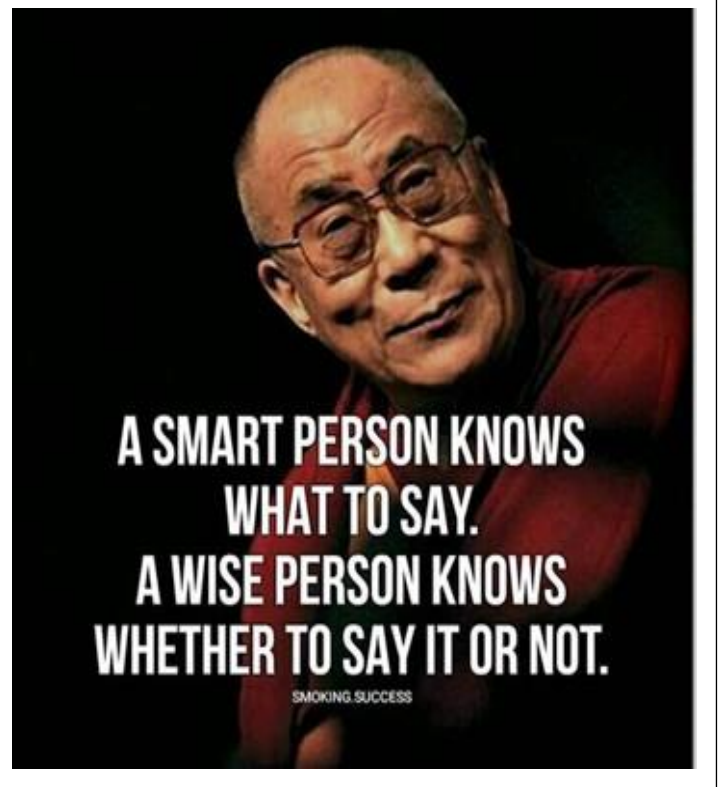
There is an extensive and reasonably-priced Menu, and reports of members' experience eating there have been very favourable. You can view the pub's Menu at <https://thewestoncross.co.uk/our-menus/new-menu-monday-17th-may-2021/> Please select your Starter/Main Course and pre-order by emailing your choices to Peter Hines at pah024@hotmail.com no later than Wednesday 23rd February.

After the long Covid break we would love to re-establish Pub Lunches as a regular part of Probus life, so please come along if you possibly can. New members will be especially welcome.



Pub lunches (really fun sociable events to which partners are very welcome) are resuming, but Peter and Lee Hines are still encouraging members to give them a heads-up of possible locations that aren't too far away or too expensive, and are able to accommodate a typical attendance of 20–25.

Ed



From the Social Secretary

Feedback on the Christmas Lunch 2021 at the Speech House. Many thanks to those who replied to my request for comments on the Christmas Lunch. I had almost a “full house” of replies, so more than enough to gauge the level of satisfaction and that there was sufficient support for a return visit for the Spring Lunch. There were a few adverse comments relating to the food, parking, ambient noise and the possible need for a public address system (so that we can better hear Fraser’s jokes??), but I hope they can be satisfactorily addressed. On the subject of food, the comments mainly concerned the Turkey Main Course which some felt was not of the standard expected. I am hopeful that on a repeat visit in the Spring, we will have some influence in the choices of each course. Regarding car parking, the hotel did agree to open the gate onto the adjacent field for overflow parking; I’m not sure if that actually happened, but I’ll check next time. A number of us felt that the ambient noise level was quite high (probably due to the echo effect from a lot of hard surfaces), I’m not sure if anything can be done about that, but I’ll make enquiries. I have asked if there is a P.A./Microphone System available and am still waiting for a reply, but in any case I have confidence in the PROBUS In-House Tech Team’s ability to sort something out if necessary.

Note for the Diary PROBUS Spring Lunch 5th April 2022 12.30 for 1.00 pm at the Speech House, Cinderford. Further details to follow in the next edition of the Newsletter.

John Martin