



## **NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB**

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

### **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

**April 2022**

### **Looking Ahead: May**

**3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Pub Lunch at the**

**Trumpet**

**10<sup>th</sup>**

**The World of Precious**

**Metals – Brian Ely**

**24<sup>th</sup>**

**Rout on the Riviera – the**

**Slapton Sands disaster –**

**Paul Barnett**

**WWI:** Date 28/07/1914

28+7+19+14= 68

**WWII:** Date 1/09/1939

1+9+19+39 =68

**Invasion of Ukraine:** Date  
24/02/2022

24+2+20+22 =68

## **April Diary**

### **Spring Lunch at the Walwyn Arms**

**Much Marcle**

**April 5th @ 1230**

### **12th Mike Bottomly- Jack in the Green**



A talk about the revival of an old Gloucester custom. The Jack in the Green consists of a wooden or wicker frame that is covered in woven foliage, including green branches, leaves, and flowers. It is worn on the upper half of a human body and carried along in May Day processions. There is often a slot in the frame out of which the individual inside of it can see, and the individual's feet can often be seen below the framework.

### **26<sup>th</sup> AGM and members' personal stories**



The annual Probus Business meeting, followed by odd tales from members' lives. If not on the way to the forum, then maybe to school, to work, to the airport. Could be in for some surprises!

## **Miscellany**

David has been looking at venues and costings for outings, and warned of the significantly increased costs if coaches are involved. Future collaboration with trips organised by Newent Local History Society are a possibility to keep costs down. Andrew has said that he had not seen any suitable theatre shows to date.

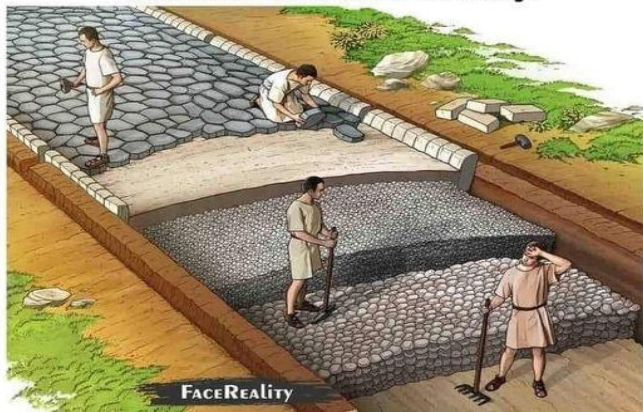
Ray has received thanks from the Gorsley Village Hall committee for moving the speakers from their dangerous position onto the side of the stage. He thanked the Tech Team for carrying out the work.

Members are encouraged to support the raffles: income from this has been lower than usual recently.

At the AGM Mike will be recommending an increase in annual subscriptions to £75. This of course needs members' approval.

The Spring Lunch has attracted 39, and Peter Hines is already taking bookings for May's pub lunch at the Trumpet: please see his email for menus.

**Without a single degree, they built us roads that have lasted an eternity.**



**and then, the engineers arrived!**



### **An engineer writes.....**

.....and they looked on in amazement and concluded that it should last forever as long as it was properly maintained, and apart from inventing some clever machinery that would help to build the roads a bit more quickly with a bit less manpower without losing anything in terms of quality and durability, they couldn't improve on the original design.

Then the accountants arrived, took one look and concluded that it was clearly much too complicated, take far too long to build and therefore cost too much and so any future road building must use a cheaper, quicker design using cheap materials and wouldn't need to last as long.

Then the politicians arrived, agreed with the accountants, but thinking they should tighten up the specification, announced that it wouldn't need to last longer than five years because after that, it would be someone else's problem because no maintenance would be carried out in the meantime.

*John Martin*

**Traffic News:** In most of England we drive on the left of the road, but in Herefordshire we drive on what's left of the road.

**Valete:** The chap who invented predictive texting has pissed away. His funfair is next monkey.

## **Blue Plaques**

Gloucestershire has an abundance of Blue Plaques, those ubiquitous symbols that are attached to a building to show that a noted person once lived there or at least had a connection with it. So many in fact that our speaker, Nigel Thompson, had to choose just four as examples of some of our famous residents in his recent talk.

One test to determine whether a person was an intellectual, or not, used to be whether he could whistle the William Tell overture without associating it with the Lone Ranger, that TV series of the 1960s. Nigel added another test; one, who on hearing Gustav Holst's The Planet Suite, did not immediately think of Doctor Who. The composer's main opus was used extensively in that eponymous children's TV serial, very often heard from the relative safety of behind the family sofa. Holst was of course born in Cheltenham and was Gloucestershire through and through in spite of a name that had Germanic, Latvian and Swedish origins; his birthplace is commemorated by the familiar blue plaque on the site of a now demolished house in Bath Road, Cheltenham .

Another recipient of a Blue Plaque and whose name perhaps deservedly should be better known is Hubert Booth. He was, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Gloucestershire's answer to James Dyson as the inventor of the vacuum cleaner.. Like its modern day counterpart, it used the suction method to remove dust and dirt, although a possible drawback was that Booth's version required a horse to tow it and measured some 6 feet high and 10 feet long. Long tubes connected it to the house in question via the wonders of a door but its introduction was not at first welcome owing to the preponderance of cheap labour in the form of "skivvy maids" with their hand held dustpan and brush. Booth was born in Gloucester, near the site of the present day library.

Gloucestershire has long had an association with the aircraft industry but someone who, if perhaps not deserving of the title of the father of the British aircraft industry at least can claim to have a hand in its parentage, is Frederick Handley-Page another Cheltenham born son of Gloucestershire. Apprenticed as an engineer, after qualifying he joined the fledgling Royal Aeronautical Society (RaeS) and, with the unlikely personage of an artist Jose Weiss, was soon redesigning aeroplanes in time for the first world war where his planes carried the then heaviest bombs in the world. With Weiss, he designed a revolutionary wing, variations of which are in use today. The second world war saw him come into his heyday with the Lancaster heavy bomber which was used to devastating effect on raids on Germany. However the end of hostilities meant there was little or no demand for his products and, in the post war consolidation of the UK aircraft industry saw the company's demise.

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The last plaque holder to figure in Nigel's list was John Maskelyne who was born in Cheltenham in 1839 and was originally apprenticed as a watchmaker. It was while watching a performance in the Town Hall by two fraudulent spiritualists that he realised how easy it was to trick people. He set about debunking the couple's claims and set upon a career of performing tricks with a partner, George Cooke. After a slow start their fame spread and they toured the country finishing up by starring for 31 years at the capital's prestigious Egypt Hall. He was also an inventor, among which was a door lock for use in toilets which required the insertion of an (old) penny to open it; hence the expression "to spend a penny". He died in 1917 but several generations of his family continued in his footsteps. Nigel's talk was well received and opened many members' eyes to the wealth of talent that has existed in the county for so long.

Peter Hayes

### **Spring Lunch**

Just a final reminder that the 2022 Spring Lunch will be at the Walwyn Arms, Much Marcle on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April at 12.15 pm for 1.00 pm, and there will be 39 attending.

As this will be a less formal event than the Christmas Lunch, there may not be a seating plan. However, I intend to produce name cards with menu choices to remind us what we have ordered (and who we are!!)

In case of any problems on the day, the telephone number of The Walwyn Arms is 01531 660601 and my mobile number is 07980 578031

I look forward to seeing you there on the day.

John Martin

### **Probus Outings 2022**

*David asks that members consider what might interest them and/or be affordable.*

1. National Memorial Arboretum
  - a. Date: - TBA
  - b. Cost: - Entry Free, Coach only  
c.£25 Plus any tour extras
  - c. Time: - Approx. 1hr 45min Hour  
coach trip c.90 miles Start 9.00am  
back 5.00 pm
  - d. Facilities: -
    - i. Shop
    - ii. Catering: - Restaurant and  
Coffee shop (or take a  
picnic)

- i. Land Train 50 min round trip c.  
£6 (Should be pre booked for a  
Group)
- ii. Chapel, 11am Remembrance  
service and 2pm  
introduction/welcome
- iii. Exhibitions normally open from  
10.30am (except some  
Mondays)
- iv. Walks around the site

#### 2. Great Britain Ship, Bristol

- a. Date:- TBA
- b. Cost:- Group Senior C.£15.40 plus  
about £3 for a guided Tour (Limited to  
20 people per group), Plus Coach  
£c.£20 entry, i.e. total about £40 per  
head
- c. Time:- Approx. 1hour coach trip c.50  
miles. Start 10.00am back 4/5.00pm
- d. Facilities: -
  - i. Shop
  - ii. Catering:- Small Snack Bar or  
local facilities alongside the  
docks
  - iii. Ship:- self guided tour and  
exhibitions around the site
  - iv. Brunel Institute, Museum and  
also research facilities (incl in  
ticket price)
  - v. Walks and catering around  
Bristol docks (Not part of the  
exhibition area)

#### 3. Worcester

- a. Date:- TBA
- b. Cost:- £7 for guided tour
- c. Time:- Approx. 90 mins Guided Tour.  
Morning 10.30 or Afternoon 2.30: Own  
transport to Worcester
- d. Shared car or rail from Ledbury (£8.10)  
or Gloucester (£11.50) this is a standard  
fare. There are discounts for railcard  
and possibly cheaper fares for small  
group travel at the same time if booked  
in advance.
- e. Facilities: - None provided. Use facilities  
in Worcester

Note:- The coach costs are dependent on at least 25 participants and final cost will depend on the total number travelling by coach.



# OPENING TIME AT THE WESTON CROSS



*Around thirty attended Probus' latest pub lunch at the Weston Cross: a really convivial occasion when it was obvious that folk were relieved at last to be able to go somewhere. The Club owes Peter Hines (and his loyal partner) a great debt for selflessly trying out hostelries on a weekly basis. It's a demanding rôle but someone has to do it. If you've never been to one of these events, you are missing out on the point of the Club!*

## **Writing an Autobiography**

Charlotte Goodworth gave a most interesting presentation. The autobiography helps people to share memories, family tales, and can be simple, but very interesting. It can be amusing. She shared an example of where a family had a memory of their lavatory on a farm in Wales. So it is self-life writing, and shared experiences can make good stories. Every family has a story to tell.

*The autobiography can have the following benefits:*

1. It can be enjoyable and therapeutic, and can give a sense of achievement. It is about events that shape one's life.
2. It a family history, a legacy for those around us. It can help children understand the family history.
3. It can be social history, illustrating the changes in one's lifetime.

*How can we go about it?*

1. Documents can be used, for example birth certificates, marriage certificates, bills, contracts etc.
2. The family tree can be very helpful in finding one's heritage.
3. Family photographs are very valuable recalling past events.
4. Some people keep diaries of events day by day, often over many years.
5. People may have notebooks where they record an event of special interest.
6. Other people's autobiographies may help to recall one's experience on certain dates.

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7. Visits to places of interest may kindle many treasured memories of the past. Old soldiers like to visit former battlefields or cemeteries where old comrades are buried.

*Charlotte then gave some tips:*

1. Who are you writing for, and who do you want to read your autobiography?
2. Will you write piecemeal, or have you a chronology of events?
3. First lines – do you wish to start at a pivotal point?
4. Peaks – a series in your life of failures and successes.
5. Favourite anecdotes – popular stories important to you.
6. Be specific – add detail to your story.
7. World events – how they fit into your own story. Charlotte gave an example of a sailor who was present at D-Day.

To conclude, Charlotte told us what she could offer. The autobiography would be in a hardback book. She had some examples with her. She had trained as a journalist, had editorial experience and a degree in English. She will record your story, organising it into chapters and will research events around the story. She describes herself as a compassionate listener.

In all, a most interesting and enjoyable talk.

*Michael Bennett*

## **Russia Today**

Q What is the difference between the dollar and the rouble?

A *The dollar is backed by gold, the rouble by tanks.*

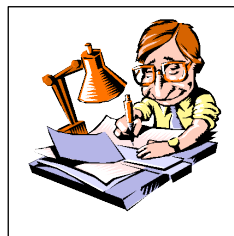
Q Is it true that the Soviet Union is on the brink of an abyss?

A *No. It used to be true, but since then we have taken a great step forward.*

Dog owners - please give generously ...



They're cute and look harmless but they are loud, incredibly expensive to keep, and absolutely untrainable! The other one is a kangaroo. I don't know anything about kangaroos...



*This is the last newsletter under the present editorship. May I sincerely thank the approximately 20 members who have been willing (or just occasionally pressed) contributors, along with several female associates. - Ed*