

NEWSLETTER



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



JULY 2022

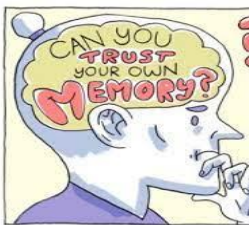
Upcoming
Events



PUB LUNCH



TUESDAY 5th JULY 2022 at 12.30
The Mill Race, Walford
Nr Ross-on-Wye



TUESDAY 12 JUNLY 2022

Dr Kate Bellamy

“The Joy of Fake Memory”

False memory refers to cases in which people remember events differently from the way they happened or, in the most dramatic case, remember events that never happened at all. False memories can be very vivid and held with high confidence, and it can be difficult to convince someone that the memory in question is wrong



CLUB GARDEN PARTY



TUESDAY 26 JULY 2022
AT GORSLEY VILLAGE HALL
12.00 – 15.30

OBITUARY



Harold Williams

1928 - 2022

Harold joined Probus in his latter years but, in the relatively short time that he was a member, he made many friends in his quiet understated way. Unfortunately, ill health forced him to resign some years ago but nonetheless he will be sadly missed.

A lifelong Gloucester man, he was educated at The Crypt, a local grammar school. From there he went to a local but internationally recognised engineering company, Rotol [now part of the Safran Group] part of the county's burgeoning aircraft industry; In fact, the company's name is a combination of its two founding companies, Rolls Royce and BristTOL Aircraft. Much of Harold's time there was spent on the development of the company's propellers, which were and indeed still are, specified on much of the world's aircraft.

In his leisure time, both he and his wife Kay were keen dancers and bowlers. At the latter both played at County level while they made an attractive couple, gracing many dance floors in the county and beyond, indulging in their passion for sequence dancing.

We send our commiserations to Kay and their two sons

Peter Hayes



Staying Safe at the beach this summer

Two out of three people in the UK will head to the seaside at least once this year. Most beach goers will have an enjoyable and relaxing time. So, when something goes wrong, who can help?

RNLI Lifeboat Volunteers and Lifeguards can respond within minutes, and often save lives close to the shore.

The majority of rescues carried out by the RNLI involve people who had no intention of ever going into the water. The most common cause is people being cut off by the tide (Always check the tide tables), falling from rocks or going into the sea after dogs.

Lifeguards assisted over 29,400 people last year.

When heading to a beach, you are urged to respect the water and visit a Lifeguarded Beach.

On a lifeguarded beach there are trained professionals to help keep you safe – they'll be on hand if something goes wrong, in or out of the water. Make sure you and your family have a safe and fun trip to the coast.

If

If lifeguards are on patrol, then you'll need to know your flags:



Red and yellow flags

Lifeguarded area. Safest area to swim, use bodyboard and inflatables.



Black and white chequered flags

For surfboards, stand-up paddleboards, kayaks and other non-powered craft. Launch and recovery area for kite surfers and windsurfers. **Never swim or bodyboard here.**



Red flag

Danger! **Never go** in the water under any circumstances when the red flag is flying.



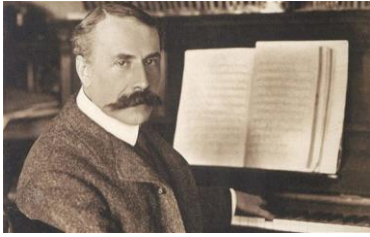
Orange windsock

Indicates offshore or strong wind conditions. **Never use inflatables when the windsock is flying.**

If the beach you're at is not lifeguarded, please take extra care if you are going into the water. Remember a lot of beaches overseas do not provide lifeguards.

During this hot weather you are reminded of the dangers of swimming in Rivers, Lakes, Quarries etc

The water is very cold and jumping in can cause "Cold Water Shock" which is a killer.



John Goldswain our speaker on June 14th gave a presentation on Edward Elgar's "Malvern Years"

John Goldswain a self-confessed Elgar nut, he and his wife moved to live near Malvern in time for the 2007 Festival of Elgar's music. Elgar lived from 1857 until 1934: this talk, despite its title, covered a huge amount of it.

This reviewer can never hear the *Introduction and Allegro* without visualising Ken Russell's early film about the composer charging around the Malvern's by pushbike, composing in his head as he rode. Malvern became Elgar's home for many years (although he and wife Alice unbelievably moved home a total of 26 times). The talk was illustrated not by PowerPoint but by well selected excerpts from the music, and our speaker was clear, authoritative and witty even though basically tied to a script. It would make great radio. We even heard Elgar's own voice when conducting an orchestra playing (inevitably) *Land of Hope and Glory*. The well-known tunes just seemed to pour out over the years, even though he wasn't knighted until 1904 and for much of his life never felt he had the recognition he deserved.

Elgar's parents were both cultured people: his father an organist who would pop out to the pub during a sermon and leave his son to deputise, while his mother came from Weston Under Penyard and further greatly encouraged their son (one of several siblings, some of whom died in childhood). He hated teaching violin and piano but still ended up marrying one of his pupils, who over time realised his great talent and played a large part in score editing. They moved to Great Malvern in 1891 and he worked on many less well-known compositions, including *Caractacus*, set around British Camp. Although he was still mainly a provincial and choral composer, the time at Malvern produced almost a quarter of his total output.

John offered some unusual insights; Elgar liked cycling, kite flying and conducting sometimes explosive chemistry experiments. The composing always began in his head while pursuing these interests. He loved dogs but Alice didn't, so when she predeceased him, he took on two and gave them places at the dining table. The mind boggles.

The musical pinnacle was probably *Dream of Gerontius*; rejected as an idea by Dvorak, it created performance problems not just by its difficulty for singers and players of the time (as someone who's performed it many times, I well know that it is tricky for the inexperienced) but because of prejudice against its Catholic theology.

He was probably hell to live with. He could be intemperate, impatient with other contemporary composers' success, and took criticism personally. But this remarkable man never had formal lessons in composition: he learned on the job. And John's memorable, understandable conclusion was "I wish I'd met him but I do wonder if I'd have liked him."

Paul Dodd



Sea Changes – Changes to our Coastline

Dennis Harvey

Dennis Harvey gave an interesting presentation entitled “**Sea Changes – Changes to our Coastline**”.

His talk covered the world. Starting by explaining that once there had been only one land mass in one extensive Ocean.

As the land mass broke up on its tectonic plates, coast lines were created.

Over Millennia, coastlines would change as land rose and fell due to continuing volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Over that period, Earth’s climate also changed and colder climate would lock up water at the poles lowering sea levels and warmer conditions would cause ice to melt and raise sea levels.

During human civilisation, the changes to our coastlines have continued causing several large cities to disappear under rising sea levels.

One specific example given was of Doggerland, which was a land mass joining the UK to Europe. Some 8,200 years ago, a catastrophic release of water from a North American glacial lake and a tsunami from a submarine landslide off Norway, inundated whatever remained of Doggerland

The second half of the talk covered “The Great North Sea Storm of 1953” which Dennis personally experienced as a 12-year-old living in Gorleston, near Great Yarmouth.

He showed some predictions of sea level changes that could occur in 100 years due to manmade global warming.

The talk ended with a worrying map of the UK showing that that the worst prediction of a 3-metre sea level rise, would put large areas of the east coast under water.

However, we were reassured that Gorsley village Hall looked safe!!!

So Probus meetings could continue.

Chris Lathan



Note from the Chairman

I have retreated into the house to escape the high temperatures we are enjoying? or enduring? at the moment. It seems like a good opportunity to mention forthcoming events

Summer Garden Party 26th July- this is the big event for the month and the committee hope that most of you will be able to make it. There are bound to be some clashes with holiday plans or family visits but we are hopeful that 40+ will be present. We will be looking for committed numbers by sending a name sheet round starting at the next meeting. We need to know numbers pretty accurately as there will be a cost to the catering depending on numbers. If 40 attend then the cost will be about £10 each. There will be a roast, rolls and coleslaw provided by Gurney's the butchers in Ledbury and there will be a vegetarian option for those who want it. We, that is the committee are now putting our appeal hats on and asking if any of the ladies would be prepared to make a light pudding. Jenny is happy to co-ordinate this so that we do not end up with too many or all the same thing. I will send an e-mail out with more details nearer the time.

Outings- We are exploring the possibility of forming a loose association with Newent History Society with regard to coach trips as this will help to reduce cost per person. As our numbers have fallen over the Pandemic Years it is increasingly difficult to arrange any trips at a reasonable cost. There are two outings on offer at the moment, the details of which you have been sent by David. It would be good if there is an uptake of the offer. I certainly would have liked to join the Merthyr trip but will be in North Wales on that date.

Keep cool and enjoy the summer.

Andrew

HEADLINES THAT STATE THE OBVIOUS

*One armed man applauds
the kindness of strangers*

**Hospitals resort
to hiring doctors**

**Bridges
help
people
cross river**

**DOCTOR SAYS THAT
STARVATION CAN LEAD
TO HEALTH HAZARDS**

**Miracle cure
kills fifth patient**

**Statistics show that teen
pregnancy drops off significantly
after age 25**



**Where
am I?**

Answers on a
£10 note and
forwarded to
the Newent &
District Probus
Secretary!

The horse and mule live 30 years
But nothing knows of wines or beers
The cow drinks water by the ton
Yet short of 20 years is done
The dog but naught of whisky
knows
Yet then by 15 years he goes
The cat in milk and water soaks
But then in 12 short years he
croaks
The modest sober bone-dry hen
Lays eggs but seldom reaches 10
But sinful ginful rum soaked me
Survive for 3 score years and 10
And some of them a lucky few
Stay pickled till they're 92

Melford Jones RIP

Did you know that
14 muscles are
activated when
opening a bottle
of wine? Fitness
is my passion 😎

Are you are sweating
whilst putting fuel in
your car?
Feeling sick when
paying?
You have got the new
Carownervirus



THE ROAD TO ROMANIA



In April 1992, together with two friends (John D and Rodney), I was driving a 7.5-ton truck across Romania worrying about the real possibility of running out of fuel.

To put this into context, our church in Tilehurst near Reading held a fundraising project every year for a charity or otherwise worthy cause and throughout the year, funds were raised in various ways for whichever cause had been selected, a different cause being selected each year. This particular cause was brought to our attention by one of our members, a schoolteacher, who had a colleague whose brother was the deputy head of a school in a village called Segarcea-Deal in Southern Romania and was desperate for supplies, as was the local Pharmacy.

With previous projects, at the end of each fundraising year, the church would present a cheque for the amount raised and carry on with raising funds for the next selected cause. However, in this particular case, the intended recipients had no means of buying the materials needed so we had to acquire the materials first and then find a way to deliver them.

By this time in the early 1990s, some experience had been gained by various fundraising organisations with contacts in Romania, mainly with the orphanages, following the fall of Ceausescu's dictatorship. As a result, we were able to gain practical advice on the various ways of delivering the goods and the procedures to follow in case we decided to deliver ourselves. In the end, we decided that it would probably be more reliable and significantly cheaper if we were to hire a truck and make the journey ourselves, which is what we did.

We got a "shopping list" from the school and by negotiation and word of mouth, managed to acquire more than was needed. As examples, through a chance conversation with the company Safety Officer, I had several large boxes of laboratory glassware, microscopes and microscope slides delivered to my office in London. I was even offered an Electron Microscope which sadly, I had to refuse! We came to an arrangement with Stanford's Map Shop in London who kindly supplied us with geography books, large wall maps and globes at considerable discount. We were asked for a photocopier so that the school could copy sections of textbooks (of which there was a desperate shortage), however, because of the likely high cost and difficulty of repair and maintenance, we opted for an epidiascope instead which allowed textbooks and any other printed work to be projected onto a screen, and being a relatively simple piece of equipment, easier to repair and maintain than a photocopier.

I consulted with my GP as to suitable drugs for the pharmacy and was able to buy a significant quantity of general-purpose drugs such as eye medication, antibiotics and Paracetamol from an organisation specialising in the supply of drugs to 3rd world countries.

In addition to the 'shopping list' goods, we took a lot of good usable second-hand clothes, toiletries and sweets etc. I recall that we seemed to have vast quantities of writing paper with us.

We were able to hire a suitable truck with a 'crew cab', i.e., one with a sleeping compartment behind the seats which meant that we were able to carry everything we would need on the journey in the cab and leave the cargo doors securely locked with a customs seal, courtesy of a friendly customs officer who also happened to be a member of the church!

Among the key pieces of advice we got from several sources before we set off, were:

- 1 It could take an average of 9 hours to cross the border from Germany to Austria and 2 days to cross the border from Hungary to Romania
- 2 Do not stop in the border town of Arad in Romania because of danger of bandits.
- 3 Do not drive at night in Romania (partly due to the risk of accidents with people on bicycles and horse-drawn carts with little or no lighting on their way to work in the early morning, and partly due to the bandit risk)
- 4 Do not sleep in the truck.
- 5 Do not deal with the gypsies

Our route took us via Calais through France, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Hungary to Romania, around 1600 miles to our destination.

We arrived at the German/Austrian border crossing to find the freight park empty and were able to go straight from counter to counter; from memory, we had to present our papers at about four different counters. Having been warned that it could take 9 hours, we were on our way within about 15 minutes.

We stopped in a small town to the west of Vienna for the night, and as the only nearby public vehicle park was underground and wouldn't accommodate the truck, we took up about five parking places outside a supermarket and put a note in the window explaining to the police that we would be away by around 6.00 am the following day, it seemed to work.

Our journey across Austria to Hungary was uneventful and as we approached the border with Romania, we innocently thought we would see how long the queue looked before deciding whether to spend the night in Hungary and cross the border in the morning. In the event, we were stopped by the police/army/local militia (armed and dangerous looking anyway) about half a mile before the border zone and made to wait in the queue. Curiously, the vehicle in front was an empty car transporter from Marseilles on its way to Turkey! When I asked the local 'soldier' what was happening, he told me that the Romanians were operating a go-slow causing the build-up of traffic. I explained what we were doing and when I asked if it would be possible to go to the front of the queue, he made it clear that we were to stay where we were. Two of us walked to the front of this overflow queue to investigate and witnessed a Danish Transit Van on a similar mission to ourselves which had overtaken the queue and tried to argue with the officer in charge who made it abundantly clear that they were to return to the back of the queue. I was told that this happened frequently with the same result every time so we were glad that we hadn't tried the same stunt otherwise we would have finished up about a quarter of a mile further back than where we started. In the end, when we finally got to the border zone proper (about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the actual border), I explained our mission to the officer in charge and he told me to bring the truck to the front and after about $\frac{1}{4}$ hour and a box of chocolates, we were in a sort of 'no man's land' and then the Romanian Border Control. The whole process from being stopped at the overflow queue to getting through Romanian border control at around 3.00 a.m., was about nine hours – a considerable improvement on the anticipated worst case of two days.

Shortly after reaching the border town of Arad, we hit a 'pothole' which caused the truck cab to bounce up and down wildly. After the bouncing stopped, Rodney (who was driving at the time) said he couldn't slow down because the accelerator pedal was partly jammed in that although it would go down, it wouldn't come back up. To find out what had happened, we had to empty the cab and hinge it forward to get at the engine compartment. The cab was mounted on two large hinges with rubber buffers to lessen the effect of bad roads and the accelerator cable with its outer sheath passed through one of the hinges. The effect of the bouncing up and down was that the cab bottomed on the buffers and squashed the cable's outer casing.

Fortunately, I had taken a few basic tools with me and was able to squeeze the casing in the opposite direction to reduce the effect. I couldn't free it completely, but we had a rubber bungee luggage strap which I was able to fix to the end of the cable and hook it onto a bracket at the back of the engine. The result was a working but very heavy accelerator pedal for the next roughly 2000 miles!

Shortly after resuming our journey, John D was fast asleep, Rodney was driving and I was wide awake (from the adrenalin – negotiating with the border guards and fixing the truck) After a short while, I took over reminding him to keep a look out for traffic (bikes and carts), but by this time he was asleep. Eventually at around 6.00 a.m., I had to stop and pulled into a sort of rest area, and we slept in the truck

We eventually had some breakfast (in the truck) and carried on, thinking it was time to look for fuel, having been advised beforehand that filling stations were few and far between and generally on the outskirts of the towns. We came across the first filling station at around 10.00 am with a short queue, I asked if there was any diesel (motorina), there wasn't but might be in the afternoon!! The story gradually got worse during the day until we reached a huge truck stop which had plenty of fuel but no electricity to drive the pumps!

We continually recalculated to see if we might have enough fuel and got seriously worried that we might not make our destination as by around 6.00 pm, all the filling stations were closed, and we presumed had run out of fuel.

At around 7.00pm we came across a filling station that appeared to be doing business, the attendants in jeans and leather jackets didn't look anything like those we had seen previously (overalls with an armed guard in most cases) They had diesel and agreed that if we paid in US Dollars, we could come to the front of the queue and I estimated that we could take about 150 litres for \$60

We were never sure who was selling whose diesel, but we assumed it was some sort of gypsy enterprise; we were just pleased to have a full tank having taken on 147 litres.

We spent two nights at our destination where we were very well looked after by a very grateful village. One of the surprising incidents was the look of pleasure on the pharmacist's face at the sight of huge tubs of Paracetamol which I had bought in Croydon and had been manufactured in Bulgaria the other side of the river (Danube). In fact, we had been able to take enough drugs to be able to supply the local hospital.

The return journey was more straightforward because having an empty truck, the border controls were less stringent, and we were able to cross into Hungary at a more convenient point. We managed to talk our way to the front of the queue again at around midnight on a very muddy road; this time it cost us a torch (the big rubber one from Jill's car – good value we thought)

Having taken good advice before we set off, circumstances took over and we broke every rule in the book!

This was a successful journey with a number of unexpected events and in all honesty, had I known how it was to turn out, especially with the diabolically bad Romanian roads, I wouldn't have volunteered. However, having done it, I'm glad I did, especially having seen the delight on the faces of our hosts, and we remained in contact for several years afterwards.

Although it was 30 years ago, I can remember most of it as if it were yesterday.

John Martin

**Thanks to all those who
submitted articles.
Ed (temp)**



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