

NEWSLETTER



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



MAY 2023

Chairman's Farewell

When I took over from John as Chairman last April I did so with a few hopes and ambitions. The hope was that we had seen the back of Covid and that all meetings would be held face to face in the hall and also with the assistance of Wi-Fi relay the meetings to the few who felt unable to attend. Happily, even though many members contracted Covid during the year, no meetings were cancelled or wholly relayed via Zoom and a full programme of meetings and speakers was arranged.

The primary ambition was to see stability in membership numbers and this was almost achieved. Five members retired last April and during the year 4 new members joined us. Regrettably, we lost Richard Crisp and Fred Passant as a result of their long standing health problems and both will be missed. Richard as a 'tech team' member and Fred as our longest serving member. In addition Richard's wife Jane and past member Tony Denby's wife Beryl died. My other ambition was to see social activities restart in full and to a large extent this has happened with only outings and theatre trips still not taking place.

My thanks to Peter Hines and those who have followed him for organising the monthly lunches which have been well attended.

Thanks also to John Martin for arranging the excellent Christmas Lunch and also all those who organised other events such as the quiz and skittles evenings. I must not forget to include here the committee for organising the very successful Summer Party and for all their help and support during the year. Lastly thanks to you all for enabling and supporting the successful return of the debriefing sessions in the Kings Arms which follow the club meetings.

I have been fortunate during my year that no serious crisis has taken place although on two occasions the speaker did not arrive. Fortunately Mike Warburton stepped into the breach as he is so able to do. Mike as Treasurer has also kept the finances on an even keel, and for that we all thank him. I am never quite sure how he produces a budget and sets a membership fee before he knows how many members will continue into the new year. Long may he continue to do it.

At every meeting we rely on the 'tech team' to ensure the speaker has the necessary facilities to make the presentation, and our thanks are due to them for this, and the way they have picked up the pieces and carried on in spite of losing Richard. Thank you all and also Ray as our Webmaster.

If you look back at the minutes of last year's AGM you will see that Fraser was looking for a volunteer to replace him as Speaker Secretary while he continued as Secretary and Editor. A significant change has taken place in that he has stepped down as Secretary after some 7 or 8 years but continues in his other roles. Our collective thanks go to Fraser for his unstinting work which has gone into keeping the club running successfully. Fraser has been the backbone of this club and I thank him sincerely for all his help. Thanks also go to Kelvin who is standing for the role as Secretary and I am sure he will enjoy it.

Best wishes

Andrew

Andrew Graham hands over to Mike Townsend



Message from our new Chairman

I am very pleased to be writing as your new Chairman in our 47th year and take this opportunity to thank my predecessor Andrew on behalf of all of us for his expertise in keeping the Club going so successfully during the last 12 months. Fraser for all his hard work as Secretary and organising and booking the speakers that we have had and have booked for the future meetings. He has also taken over the editing of the monthly magazine. Mike Warburton for looking after the finances and keeping us solvent. Ray, our webmaster. Chris for organising the raffle each meeting. To the Committee and other members who organise the pub lunches, Christmas Lunch and Summer Party etc. I look forward to working alongside Fraser and Kelvin our newly appointed Vice Chairman and Secretary.

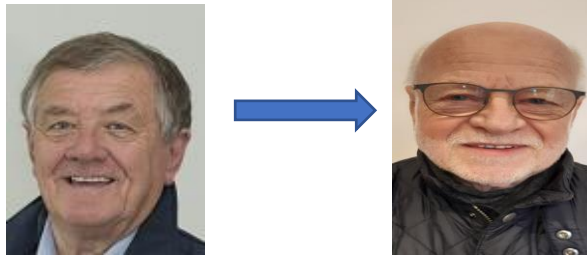
We have sadly lost a couple of our members in the last year Fred Passant and Richard Crisp. Richard, who was part of the technical team, personally helped and supported me in that role. My main focus as Chairman, will be to expand our membership. We need to do so for financial reasons to keep the Club viable, and we have a great opportunity to affect this during the coming year. Your individual help is requested therefore in trying to persuade a friend or acquaintance to join us for a taster meeting with a view to subsequent membership. Let's look forward to a great year – and a larger membership!

Best wishes

Mike T

MORE CHANGES FOR 2023- 2024

Fraser Gunn stands down as Secretary and hands over to Kelvin Ashby



It's been a real privilege to have served as secretary for the last 8 years. I was appointed to the post not long after I joined the club. Proposed by Peter Hayes who had also been secretary for some years, it gave me the opportunity to integrate into the club and get to know all the members.

I enjoyed very much the challenges of the role and I hope that I have achieved my intentions to help make the club a success. With my dual roles of programme secretary it's been a "Full on " experience, something I relished. I have always considered myself to be a "Doer" something that is the prime requirement of the role. Something I am confident Kelvin is.

I couldn't have done the job without the support of the Chairman I work with and the full support of the Committees.

Fraser

YOUR COMMITTEE FOR 2023 – 2024

CHAIRMAN:	Mike Townsend
VICE-CHAIRMAN:	Fraser Gunn
TREASURER:	Mike Warburton
SECRETARY:	Kelvin Ashby
PAST CHAIRMAN:	Andrew Graham
SOCIAL SECRETARY:	David Clowes
WEBMASTER:	Ray McCairn
SUPPLEMENTARY MEMBER:	John Martin
SUPPLEMENTARY MEMBER:	John Weeden

Associated appointments

These additional positions are vital for the smooth running of the club activities

PUB LUNCHES: Various members

SPECIAL LUNCHES: John Martin

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Fraser Gunn

TECHNICAL SUPPORT TEAM: John Franklin
Ray McCairn
Mike Townsend
David Clowes

RAFFLE ORGANISER: Chris Lathan

MAY PUB LUNCH



2nd MAY 2023

The Mill Race, Walford, Ross-on-Wye. HR9 5QS

I've been hearing that a well-known chocolate 🍫 company is rebranding for the Asian market. Probably just Chinese Wispas.

SPEAKERS FOR MAY

9th MAY - Dr Bob King – The Magic of Glass – From Fast Jets to Flat Screen's TVs

23rd MAY – Chris Witts – The Mighty Severn Bore

I phoned my Scottish boss this morning and said:
"Sorry boss, I won't be able to come in today, I've
got a bit of a cough".

He said: "You have a wee cough laddie?"

I said: "Ok cheers boss - see you next week!" 👍😊



How Wordsworth might have written about Probus

**In fields of fellowship and mirth, Where men of wisdom gather 'round,
The Probus Club, a place of worth, Where camaraderie doth abound.**

**The joy of life, the love of friends, The sharing of life's stories true,
In this, the Probus Club extends, A welcome warm to me and you.**

**No need for titles, wealth, or fame, But simple pleasures we hold dear,
The Probus Club, its very name, A beacon of goodwill and cheer.**

**With Wordsworth's heart and soul we see, A fellowship so pure and grand,
A haven for the young and free, And all who seek a helping hand.**

**So let us raise a glass of cheer, To Probus Clubs both far and wide,
May they forever persevere, And in their bonds may we abide**

Just watching TV, Mobile in hand, 999 on speed dial !





40 Things we didn't know about Steam Engines (or wanted to know)

Steam! - the very mention of it is enough to drive many (mainly men I should add) to orgasmic heights. For that reason alone, I was looking forward to Robert "Stephenson" Pritchard's talk with more than usual interest, if only to discover what heights of passion my fellow members would reach.

The word, I confess, awakens more prosaic memories in me. I immediately thought of the 1940s cinema noir movie *The Hairy Ape*.

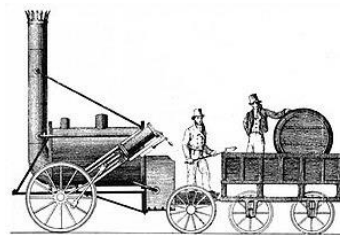
In this, cinema tough guy William Bendix plays a barely literate, eponymous ship's stoker, who has been spurned in love by an aristocratic woman and socialite; he spent what seems the rest of the film in the ship's boiler room shovelling seemingly endless amounts of coal, clad in a once white singlet and barely visible through a vast blanket of steam, plotting revenge.

Robert's talk brought me back to earth with a resounding bump.

A self-confessed railway and steam freak since childhood, he concentrated on steam as applied to railway engines and, if at times it verged on the technical, it nonetheless illustrated how the age-old commodity has played a part in ensuring the world's prosperity from the time of his alter ego's Rocket to the present day.

To start with he tested members' brains by asking the name of the most famous engine. Predictably the Rocket, The Flying Scotsman and the Mallard were early favourites. The answer was anti-climactic; that of The *Hogwarts Express* of Harry Potter fame. What Stephenson, Newcomen, Watts *et al* would have made of that was not debated but it is perhaps ironic that a fictional locomotive would take pride of place; he then progressed to engineering proper right from the very beginnings of harnessing steam as a motive power. From the intricacies and details of the size of bores used on the vast array of pipework in the innards of such engines to the choice of coal used in firing them his talk ranged in great detail, such as maybe Stephenson or even Brunel would have felt at home.

If just only one point emerged from Robert's talk it was the internationalism of steam. Barely a country was ignored in providing examples of the motive power of steam with many examples from behind the former Iron Curtain of post war Europe. Inevitably the latter hung on to their steam powered engines long after the "free" ones of the West had abandoned theirs, to the delight of steam enthusiasts if not the commuters. Slides of engines still operating in the 1970s that would not have looked out of place in a pre-war Bradshaw's (the Bible of the discerning traveller and including TV's Michael Portillo.) caught our attention. Thanks to Robert, we learned about such arcane topics of how the quality of coal and the topography of a country influenced design. Above all, the history of the steam powered engine seems to have left politics behind with evolution, not revolution being the main influence, not political dogma. If we, as an audience can assimilate and indeed remember a fraction of the content of his talk then we will all have understood the power of something that is all too easily taken for granted.



Peter Hayes

LIDL house on the Prarie



What's the difference between an alligator and a crocodile?



I believe the main difference is that one will see you later, and the other will see you in a while. I could be wrong, I'm not a zoologist.

I'm slowly getting over my obsession with Tipperary but there's a long way to go!



Selling my old camouflage gear. Serious offers only. No time wasters



New teeth for Spy's



**Thanks to all those
who submitted articles.
Ed**