

NEWSLETTER



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



MARCH 2024

Message from our Chairman

What a wet month February has been. Let's hope March will be kinder to us. I look forward to the lighter nights with the clocks going forward at the end of the month too.

We send our best wishes to Geoff Thomas, John Slack and Chris Lathan, who have not been too well of late.

I have cut my lawns for the first time this year, after all the rain and warm days the grass is growing. I have my second crop of potatoes chitting, a new variety this year Kestrel. They are appealing to both home and commercial growers because of their high disease and pest resistance, good yields, and versatility in the kitchen. My cucumber seeds have just germinated, and I have broad bean plants in the greenhouse, ready to plant out later in the month.

We had a very interesting and informative talk by Andrew Mellor on the Dymock Poets who were part of the Georgian Poets Group. I am looking forward to our next talk on The Midlands Air Ambulance Service.

We have our Skittles Evening organized by John Weeden at The King's Arms Newent. John Martin is organising the pub lunch on Tuesday 05 March, at The Weston Cross, Weston under Penyard.

Best wishes to you all. Enjoy another Spring as it unfolds and a Happy Easter.

Mike



PUB LUNCH

TUESDAY 5 MARCH 2024

Weston Cross Inn

Weston under Penyard



TUESDAY 12 MARCH

Peter Marsden

Inside the Gas Industry

British Gas (trading as **Scottish Gas** in Scotland), is an energy and home services provider in the United Kingdom. It is the trading name of British Gas Services Limited and British Gas New Heating Limited, both subsidiaries of Centrica. Serving around twelve million homes in the United Kingdom, British Gas is the biggest energy supplier in the country, and is considered one of the Big Six dominating the gas and electricity market in the United Kingdom.

The Gas Light and Coke Company was the first public utility company in the world. It was founded by Frederick Albert Winsor and incorporated by royal charter on 30 April 1812 under the seal of King George III.



TUESDAY 26 MARCH

MIKE WARBURTON

“THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY”

The **Battle of Midway** was a major naval battle in the Pacific Theatre of World War II that took place 4–7 June 1942, six months after the Empire of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and one month after the Battle of the Coral Sea. The U.S. Navy under Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, defeated an attacking fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy under Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, north of Midway Atoll, inflicting devastating damage on the Japanese fleet. Four Japanese and three American aircraft carriers participated in the battle. The Japanese fleet carriers—*Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Sōryū*, and *Hiryū*, part of the six-carrier force that had attacked Pearl Harbor six months earlier—were sunk, as was the heavy cruiser *Mikuma*. The United States lost the carrier *Yorktown* and the destroyer *Hammann*, while the carriers USS *Enterprise* and USS *Hornet* survived the battle fully intact.

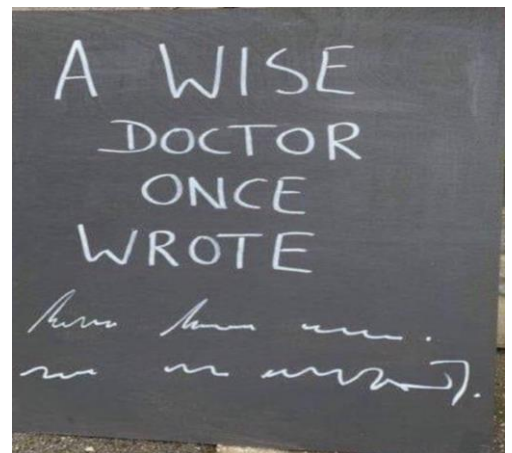
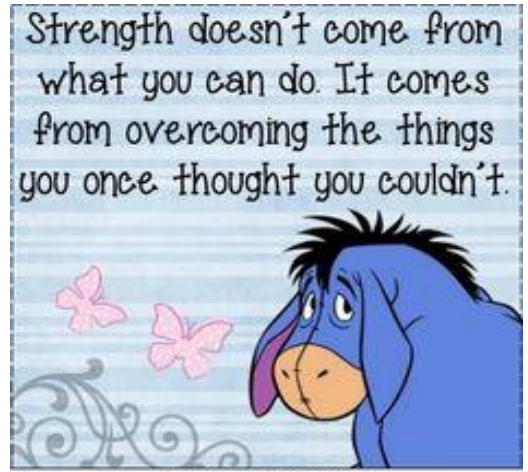
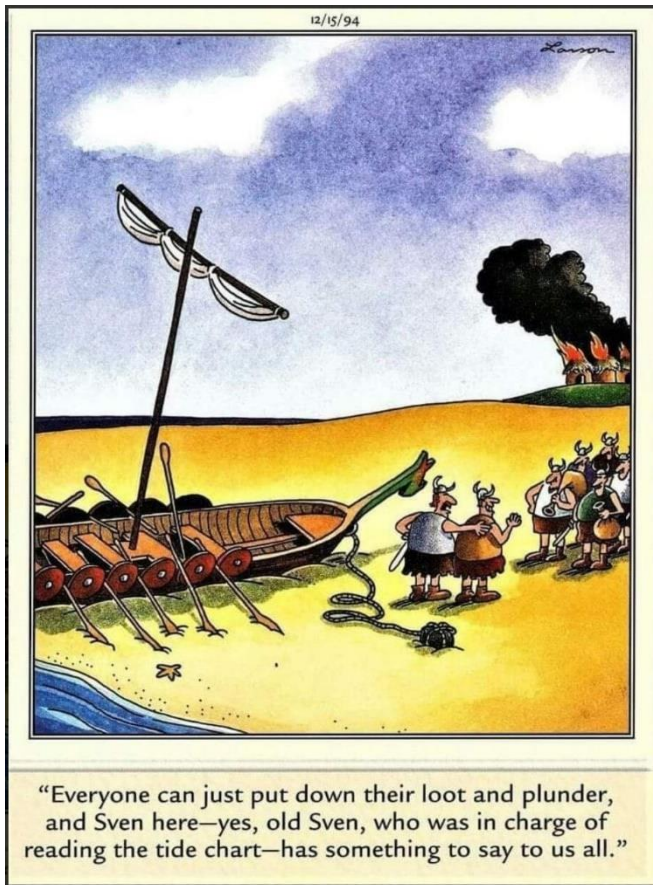
My SatNav



I have a little SatNav, I've had it all my life,
It's better than the normal ones, my SatNav is my wife.
It gives me full instructions, especially how to drive.
"Its 60 miles an hour", "you're doing sixty five."
It tells me when to stop and start and when to use the brake,
It tells me when a light is red and when it goes to green,
It seem to know instinctively just when to intervene.
It lists the vehicle just in front and all those at the rear,
And taking this into account, it specifies the gear.
I am sure no other driver has so helpful a device,
For when we leave and lock the car, it's still gives its advice.
It fills me up with counselling, each journey's pretty fraught,
So why don't I exchange it and get a quieter sort?
Aye well, you see it cleans the house makes sure I am properly fed,
It washes my shirts and things and keeps me warm in bed.
Despite all the advantages and my tendency to scoff,
I do wish that just once in a while, I could turn the blasted thing off!

Anon





NO MATTER HOW IMPOSSIBLE, OR UNIMAGINABLE SOMETHING MAY SEEM IF IT'S MEANT TO BE, IT'LL BE.

THAT'S HOW IT WAS

1. Pasta was not eaten
2. Curry was a surname.
3. A takeaway was a mathematical problem.
4. A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower.
5. Crisps were plain; the only choice we had was whether to put the salt on or not.
6. Rice was only eaten as a milk pudding.
7. A Big Mac was what we wore when it was raining.
8. Brown bread was something only poor people ate.
9. Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking.
10. Tea was made in a teapot using tea leaves and never green.
11. Sugar enjoyed a good press in those days, and was regarded as being white gold. Cubed sugar was regarded as posh.
12. Fish didn't have fingers.
13. Eating raw fish was called poverty, not sushi.
14. None of us had ever heard of yoghurt.
15. Healthy food consisted of anything edible.
16. People who didn't peel potatoes were regarded as lazy.
17. Indian restaurants were only found in India.
18. Cooking outside was called camping.
19. Seaweed was not a recognised food.
20. "Kebab" was not even a word, never mind a food.
21. Prunes were medicinal.
22. Surprisingly, muesli was readily available, it was called cattle feed.
23. Water came out of the tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than petrol for it, they would have become a laughing stock!
24. And the things that we never ever had on our table in the 50s and 60s: elbows or phones!

I don't know if Facebook has ever caused the lame to walk but it has sure caused the dumb to speak.





Poppies amongst the Daffodils.

WORDS AS A WEAPON OF WAR

*If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;"*

How many of us, once a year on Armistice Sunday, as our lips synch with Rupert Brooke's immortal poem *The Soldier*, realise that, if not written there, it was probably conceived less than a dozen miles away in nearby Dymock.

Brooke, you see was a member of an itinerant and loosely formed group who became known as the Dymock Poets and then War Poets just prior to and during the First World war.

This, and dozens of other little known facts, were revealed to Probus members by Andrew Mellor in our most recent talk. That they chanced upon Dymock was largely happenstance, due to the fact that one of them was already living there, and being impecunious and largely broke, the others did an early version of "sofa surfing" and took advantage of some cheap or free accommodation.

The 'Dymock Poets' are generally held to have been Robert Frost, Lascelles Abercrombie, Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas, Wilfred Wilson Gibson and John Drinkwater.

During the First World War Edward Thomas joined the army, with the initial rank of private. After just two years, he was promoted to second lieutenant but shortly after, at the age of thirty-eight, he was killed by the blast of a shell in the British offensive at Arras. The death of Thomas saw the break-up of the community.

Abercrombie, Brooke, Drinkwater and Gibson were poets who had contributed to *The Westminster Gazette* and were considered Georgian poets. Abercrombie died in 1938 while Gibson lived on until 1962. Edward Marsh, the group's artistic and literary patron, edited the five volumes of *Georgian Poets*.

Drinkwater had close connections with the Birmingham Repertory Theatre at the Old Rep in Station Street, which opened in 1913. Robert Frost returned to America on 13 February 1915. During his career as a poet, he received four Pulitzer Prizes and was honoured twice by the Senate. During the presidential inauguration of John F. Kennedy, Frost recited his poem "The Gift Outright", the first time that a poet had been so honoured during an inauguration.

There is a walk called the Poets' Way which takes in many of the places occupied or frequented by the poets during their time in Dymock. I can recommend it both as a physical and mental exercise. Should you undertake it, perhaps pause awhile and look over a five bar gate and ponder "is this a corner of England that Brookes had in mind".

Andrew's talk was well received and a lively question time followed.



RC135



H145

Midlands Air Ambulance Charity

The Midlands Air Ambulance Charity: Savings Lives by Saving Time – a presentation by Nicole Beebee, Gloucestershire Fundraising Executive.

On Tuesday 27th February the members were entertained by a talk on the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity (**MAAC**).

MAAC is an independent charity and healthcare provider that is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The aim of the CQC is to ensure patients can expect to receive the essential standards of quality while being treated by the MAAC team in the pre-hospital environment. Following its first CQC inspection, MAAC was rated as Outstanding in September 2023.

MAAC's aim is to *"provide patients with outstanding pre-hospital care and lifesaving intervention through the operation of helicopter-led emergency medical services (HEMS) - we will continue to save more lives and improve survivors' quality of life through the provision of a comprehensive, transparent, clinical and operational helicopter led emergency service aligned to changing patient need and demand"*.

As an independent charity, MAAC receives no funding from Government, the NHS or the National Lottery. The annual budget for operating the fleet is currently £13 - £14 million, all of which must be raised through donations.

MAAC operates and funds three air ambulances covering six Midlands counties. Based at RAF Cosford, Strensham (Services) and Tatenhill (Staffs) the air ambulances cover the counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands. The Strensham base will temporarily relocate to Staverton airport during redevelopment of Strensham services. The air ambulance fleet consists of two Airbus EC135's (£4.2m each) and one H145 (£6.7m). Top speed of the helicopters is 120 mph and fuel consumption is 250 ltrs/hour. The fleet operates daily between the hours of 07:00 to 20:00, 365 days/year. The average cost of a helicopter mission is around £2,950. They own one EC135 (£4.2m) and one H145 (£6.7m) and lease the other EC135. They intend to purchase a replacement this year.

A helicopter crew consists of a pilot, who is responsible for the aircraft and stays with the aircraft when it has landed on a mission. Pilots usually have a military background. Medical care is provided by either two Critical Care Paramedics or a Paramedic and a Doctor. In addition to its own staff, part-time doctors and paramedics supplement the team and are paid by MAAC. Military doctors are sometimes seconded to MAAC when they are between operational deployments.



In addition, MAAC has three Critical Car cars, which are BMW X5's. The cars cover three main areas – Central: Birmingham and the Black Country; Northern: Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Shropshire; Southern: Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire. The vehicles operate 24/7, 365 days per year. The cars carry the same medical equipment as the aircraft and operate mainly in urban areas. The average cost of a car mission is around £288.

Since its formation in May 1991, MAAC has attended over 74,000 emergencies (4,500 per year average). Statistics show that the bulk of the work is dealing with Cardiac Arrests (32%) or Road Traffic Collisions and the busiest day is Sunday with the least busiest day being Monday.

To ensure that the Helicopter-led (HEMS) resources are deployed effectively, a dedicated resource is embedded in the Emergency Operations Centre that receives emergency calls from the public. All calls are monitored and a decision made as to whether the emergency requires the services of a HEMS, in which case the nearest available resource is despatched irrespective of whether that resource usually covers the location of the emergency.

Chris Yates

Where am I ?





Dr Samuel Johnson

After nine years' effort, Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* appeared in 1755, and was acclaimed as "one of the greatest single achievements of scholarship".

Johnson's great contribution to the history of English lexicography was to conceive the dictionary, not as a schoolroom prop, but as a type of literary work. Johnson wrote only one dictionary, but in that one he initiated several dictionary genres.

Johnson's Dictionary had far-reaching effects on Modern English, and was pre-eminent until the arrival of the Oxford English Dictionary 150 years later.

Dr Samuel Johnson, creator of the *Dictionary of Modern English*, would often visit two sisters in 18th-century London – Mrs Digby and Mrs Brooke. On one of these visits, the two ladies were paying Johnson many compliments about his recently published dictionary, particularly commending him for not including any 'ghastly' rude words. Johnson responded, "What! my dears! then you have been looking for them?". Embarrassed, the ladies immediately dropped the subject.

Some examples:

"**Mouth-friend, noun:** One who professes friendship without intending it."

"**Oats, noun:** A Grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people."

"**Backfriend, noun:** A friend backwards; that is, an enemy in secret."

"**Camelopard, noun:** An Abyssinian animal, taller than an elephant, but not so thick. He is so named, because he has a neck and head like a camel; he is spotted like a pard, but his spots are white upon a red ground. The Italians call him giaraffa."

"**Cynanthropy, noun:** A species of madness in which men have the qualities of dogs."

"**Dull, adjective:** Not exhilarating; not delightful: as, *to make dictionaries is dull work.*"

"**Fart, noun:** Wind from behind.

Love is the fart

Of every heart;

It pains a man when 'tis kept close;

And others doth offend, when 'tis let loose"

"**Pissburnt, adjective:** Stained with urine."

Kangaroo words" are words that contain their own synonyms.

A kangaroo word sounds like something that's spoken in Australia, but it's actually a word that happens to contain its own synonym, with the letters to spell it in the correct order.

According to Dictionary.com, examples include the words

"chocolate" (which includes the synonym "cocoa"), "masculine" ("male"), "blossom" ("bloom"), "chicken" ("hen"), "rambunctious" ("raucous"), and "deceased" ("dead").



Monkey Business

My heart went out to the Macaque monkey who changed his cosy but unnatural home in Scotland for something more akin, albeit much colder, to where he belongs in the wilds. Even three square meals a day and his own private National Health service, plus the company of the herd could not compensate for a "back to Nature" existence where life wasn't orderly and pre-planned. He soon learnt of a source of food...nuts, in one those ubiquitous bird feeders that so many of us provide for our feathered friends. Alas, his freedom did not last long and his well-meaning captors soon netted him.

News of his bid for freedom coincided with David Keen's excellent talk on building and flying model aircraft. Afterwards an all too fertile imagination had the monkey sighting and falling for a beautiful blonde doll, with the obligatory good screaming voice and carrying her off to the top of the spire of Newent's church where he defied David's squadrons, beating his majestic chest as he seemingly effortlessly snatched the planes of the sky until, tragically at last he succumbed to superior forces falling to the graveyard below.

And then reality kicked in and our mini Kong awoke back in his new home, where he will spend the rest of his days wondering "Did I dream this?"

Peter Hayes

An elderly Florida lady did her shopping and upon returning to her car, found four males in the act of leaving with her vehicle. She dropped her shopping bags and drew her handgun, proceeding to scream at the top of her lungs, "I have a gun, and I know how to use it! Get out of the car!". The four men didn't wait for a second threat. They got out and ran like mad.

The lady, somewhat shaken, then proceeded to load her shopping bags into the back of the car and got into the driver's seat. She was so shaken that she could not get her key into the ignition. She tried and tried, and then she realized why. It was for the same reason she had wondered why there was a football, a Frisbee and two 12-packs of beer in the front seat. A few minutes later, she found her own car parked four or five spaces further down. She loaded her bags into the car and drove to the police station to report her mistake. The sergeant to whom she told the story couldn't stop laughing. He pointed to the other end of the counter, where four pale men were reporting a car-jacking by a mad, elderly woman described as white, less than five feet tall, glasses, curly white hair, and carrying a large handgun. No charges were filed.

The moral of the story? **If you're going to have a senior moment... make it memorable.**



Feedback ??

It's great to see so many members, partners etc joining the monthly pub lunches and it would help if I had occasional feedback on particular pubs. It's impossible to please everyone all of the time, but one can strive! Talking to several attendees at the Mill Race, for example, some were critical of how long the food took to arrive, while others it didn't matter. Some thought the menu was quite restrictive, others that it was fine. Of course we have to make allowances at smaller, privately owned establishments with limited staffing who welcome our business but can't offer the kind of instant service of chains. If anyone feels particularly positive or negative about a venue, it helps to know. We are also constrained by the places that don't open on Tuesdays, or whose prices are quite high and therefore off-putting for those with ungenerous pensions. I'd also be keen for opinions on whether places like the Roadmakers at Gorsley, where "British" options would be acceptable, or even the Greek on the Docks, serving very good value, largely Greek dishes.

Bear in mind, also, that we hold these events not just to eat but to socialise and so slow service might not matter where a noisy busy environment might.

Paul



SKITTLES EVENING

Wednesday 28 February

Members enjoyed an evening of fun (and exercise!)

At the Kings Arms, Newent

Our thanks go to **John Weeden** for organising the event and acting as scorer and a special thanks to **Ollie Weeden** who travelled 6320 miles all the way from Okinawa, Japan, especially to act as "Sticker Upper". Well done.

And of course not forgetting our champion skittlers.

Men's Champion: **Chris Yates**

Ladies Champion: **Jill Martin**

Killer Queen: **Brenda Nuttall**

SUNDAY 31ST MARCH 1am

**Don't forget to put your clocks
forward 1 hour**





**Thanks to all those who
submitted articles and assisted
with production.
Ed**

To the best of the Editors knowledge, images used
are not subject to any copyright issues.