

# NEWSLETTER



## NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



# MAY 2024

### Message from our Chairman

I am truly honoured and delighted to address you as the newly appointed Chairman of our club. It is with a sense of responsibility and enthusiasm that I step into this role, and I want to express my gratitude for the trust you have placed in me.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my appreciation to our outgoing chairman Mike for his service and leadership. His efforts have undoubtedly paved the way for the thriving community that is Probud and I am committed to building upon this foundation.

As we embark this year, my primary goal is to foster a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose within our club. Our Probud Club has a rich tradition of bringing together individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and talents. I am eager to continue cultivating an environment where each member feels valued and has the opportunity to contribute their unique strengths. I am open to your ideas, suggestions, and feedback as we work collaboratively to enhance the overall experience of being part of our club, whether it's organising engaging events, promoting meaningful discussions, or exploring new avenues for growth of our club. In the coming weeks, I look forward to learning more about the interests and aspirations that drive a fulfilling retirement. Together, we can create lasting memories and forge enduring friendships within the welcoming embrace of our Probud Club.

Thank you once again for entrusting me with the privilege of serving as your Chairman. I am confident that, with your support, we will continue to make our Probud Club a beacon of friendship, fellowship, and shared experiences.

Here's to a great year ahead!

Warm regards,

*Fraser*

# PUB LUNCH



TUESDAY 7 MAY

NEW DAWN INN

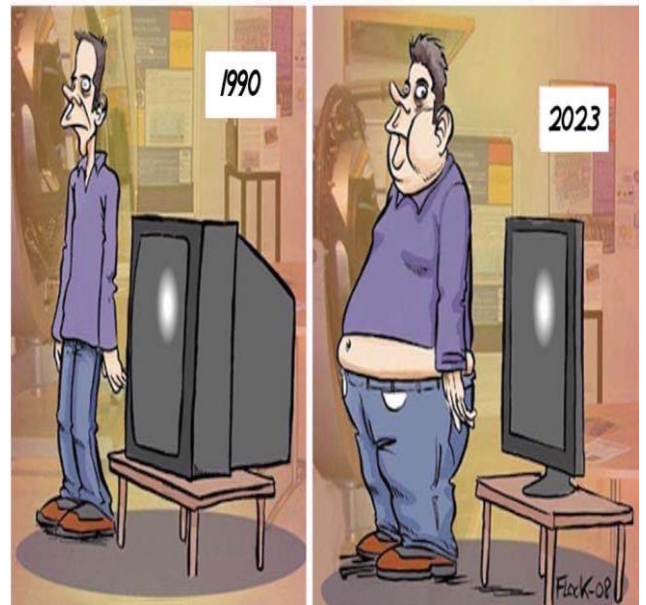
OLD TEWKESBURY ROAD, NORTON, GLOUCESTER

GL2 9LR

12.30 for 13.00



7  
t  
*'Caroline, is there any truth in these rumours about you and that fireman in the upstairs flat?'*



The "F" word can be the ONLY word in the English language that accurately describes some situations.



**The word of course is 'FEAR!'**

**What in the world were you thinking?**



**TUESDAY 15 MAY**

**John Macartney**

**Harry Ferguson**

**“The man who revolutionised farming”**



**Harry George Ferguson born in County Down, Ireland, son of a farmer, mechanic and inventor. Noted for his role in the development of the modern agricultural tractor and its three point linkage system.**

**Today his name lives on in the name of the Massey Ferguson company**

**TUESDAY 28 MAY**



**DOOD PEARCE**

**WATER SUPPLIES IN NEWENT & FOREST OF DEAN**

**OUR SOCIETY IS RUN BY INSANE  
PEOPLE FOR INSANE OBJECTIVES.**

**I THINK WE'RE BEING RUN BY  
MANIACS FOR MANIACAL ENDS AND I  
THINK I'M LIABLE TO BE PUT AWAY AS  
INSANE FOR EXPRESSING THAT.  
THAT'S WHAT'S INSANE ABOUT IT.**

**- JOHN LENNON**

**When Monty Pythons "Life  
of Brian" was banned in  
Norway, it was  
subsequently marketed in  
Sweden as " it is so funny  
it was banned in Norway"!**



**As long as everything is exactly the  
way I want it.....I am totally flexible!**



## The History and work of the RNLI – 200 years of Service and Sacrifice

### “Ordinary people doing extraordinary things”

Our own Fraser Gunn entertained us on 9 April with a colourful talk about the RNLI for whom he has been acting as a volunteer educator for some 14 years. He started with a story about a couple of 15 year old boys who had been taken by their local priest to sail to Alderney and back. On the return journey they had hit terrible weather and the boat broached twice, damaging its sails and losing its engine. An SOS call was made and the Salcombe lifeboat was despatched to rescue the three of them from the channel. One of the boys was none other than young Fraser who, for understandable reasons, has been forever grateful to the RNLI.

This year is the **200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RNLI**. The crews have always been volunteers and at the beginning it was local boatmen who offered the cover – they were untrained and unequipped. Artificial respiration was invented in 1774, not dissimilar from that offered today. A smoke enema was also used to encourage the victim back to life. A society for “the recovery of the apparently drowned” was founded the same year: this eventually became the **Humane Society**.

In 1799 a Dr Fothergill recommended that lifeboats should be stationed around the coasts, with crews provided with life jackets and being taught to swim. They should be accompanied by a law officer to protect the stricken ships from being plundered. Not long after, Sir William Hillary wrote from the Isle of Man to the government arguing that an institution was required to prevent many lives from being lost. After persistent effort his suggestions were accepted and “**The National Institution for the Preservation of lives and Property from Shipwreck**” was founded. In 1860 **Queen Victoria awarded a Royal Charter, and the RNLI was born.**

However, when Hillary died income had dropped and the organisation was in dire straits. The Duke of Northumberland took over as leader, together with Richard Lewis as Secretary and Captain John Ross as Inspector of Lifeboats.

Reluctantly they had to take a small amount of government funding. They pursued a strategy to build a lifeboat fleet, expand the rescue service and take steps to increase the safety of the crews. They also sought to increase the education of the public about the role of the RNLI. By the early 1900s it had become a self-funding charity.

Lifeboats, unlike now, were essentially open rowing boats until the start of the twentieth century. Despite this, some amazing rescues were carried out.

In 1861 the Whitby Lifeboat made 5 rescues in 6 hours, but lost 12 crew when the boat capsized. One survived, Henry Freeman, who had been the only crew member wearing an early form of cork lifejacket.

5 years later Cheltenham had a lifeboat built which was donated to Burnham on Sea and the following year Gloucester launched theirs into the Docks. Several people fell in and were rescued by the brand new boat! The Gloucester built boat was then donated to Falmouth.

In 1907 some 523 lives were saved by 4 Lifeboats off the Lizard where a liner had been stranded on the rocks, this was the largest number of people rescued in RNLI history. In 1914 it took 3 days and 6 lifeboats to rescue 144 lives from a hospital ship that had grounded off Whitby. A nurse, who did survive, had also survived the Titanic some 2 years earlier!

In WW1 the RNLI rescued over 5000, and in WW2 some 6376 were saved.

In the last 200 years, 146,277 people have been saved, an average of 2 a day for 200 years. An incredible record.

There is inevitably a price to pay for the crews who are brave enough to man the boats, often in appalling conditions. 801 crew members have died in service since 1824.

A comparatively recent tragedy was in 1981 with the loss of 16 people when the Penlee lifeboat capsized, 8 crew and 8 people they had just rescued were drowned. This was last time that a lifeboat and any crew member has been lost.

In addition to a Lifeboat service, the RNLI also provides a beach lifeguard service, funded by whoever owns the beach. It has a youth education programme and sea safety teams as well as an international lifesaving programme.

For historical reasons it operates round the Irish coast as well as the UK coast. This means it covers 19000 miles of coast, for which it has 238 stations and 457 lifeboats (and a substantial number of reserve boats). There are 5000 volunteer crew, 500 of them female, and another 2500 who act as shore crew, primarily to launch and recover the lifeboat. Call outs are controlled by the UK Maritime Coastguard Agency. Crews are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In 2023 alone there were 9312 launches, 296 lives saved and 12903 lives assisted. Following the Marchioness disaster the RNLI agreed to provide 4 lifeboats to cover the tidal part of the River Thames between Teddington and Gravesend. The lifeboat station at Tower Bridge is the busiest in the country. There are also 4 RNLI hovercraft which are particularly suited to those areas with extensive mud and sand at low tide.

Funds are primarily from donations. It takes **£188m a year** to keep the service running and some members of the public have raised staggering amounts. For instance 100 year old Vera Robinson, who is now deceased, raised over a million pounds from street collections, whereas Richard Colton gave 2 Ferraris to the RNLI – they raised £8.5m at auction.

The RNLI now has its own support centre in Poole where all new lifeboats are built. Fraser concluded with some statistics about casualties. Of the average 190 people who are drowned off the English and Irish coasts each year, 40% never intended to enter the water. Half those who died had slipped or fallen into the sea. The top 4 categories were scuba diving 50, paddle-boarding 59, yachting/boating 65 and coastal walkers 201.

Fraser's talk was lavishly illustrated with slides and videos, including a very sobering video of an elderly couple on a French beach being swept in, demonstrating the sheer power of the sea.

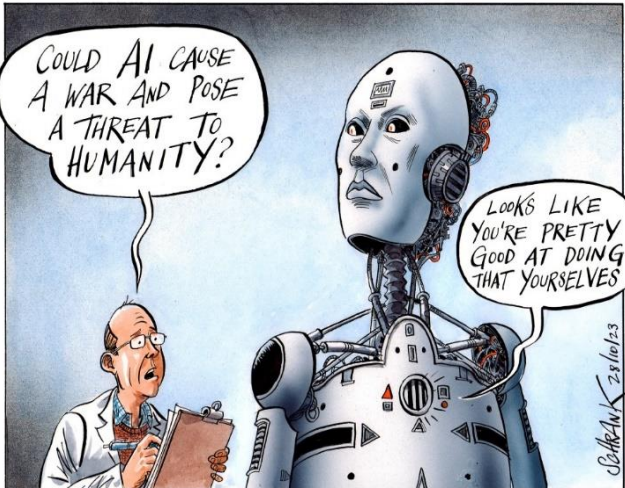
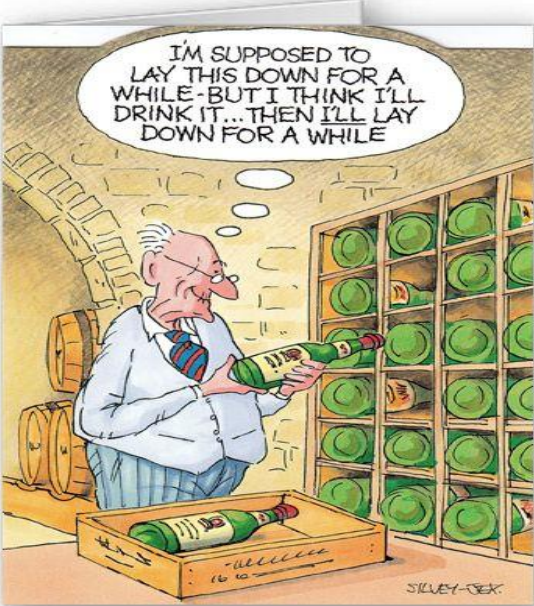
Despite the usual jokes the talk was very well received and Members donated generously to the RNLI at the end.

John Węzdź

Newent and District Probus Club



On behalf of the RNLI for your kind donation of £110



## Newent & District Probus Club

### 47<sup>th</sup> AGM

**Chairman's report:** Mike thanked the Committee for their help and support throughout his year as Chairman and Kelvin, for his hard work typing up the agendas and minutes and keeping him updated. He also thanked the Technical Team for setting up the A.V. for each meeting and ensuring all the equipment was up to date and in good working order. Additionally, he thanked Chris Lathan for running the raffle at each meeting, the organisers of the pub lunches, summer party and Christmas lunch. Lastly, he thanked all the members for "putting up with him" as Chairman over the year. He also said that sadly Colin Chave and Jack Porteous had passed away during his year as Chairman and Peter Hines wife Lee had sadly lost her brave battle with cancer. On a positive note, he noted that the club had gained members over the last year with an overall increase in the membership. He concluded by wishing Fraser and the other Club Officers all the best for the coming year.

**Treasurers report:** Mike reported that the club had a successful year financially and would have shown a surplus of over £200 had we not agreed to make an unbudgeted donation of £250 to the Gorsley Hall roof fund. The overall shortfall was £42. Subscription income was £2,101, broadly as planned. The raffle income of £631 was well above budget and he thanked Chris Lathan for running this successfully. The raffles at the summer party and Christmas lunch had been particularly well supported. Expenditure was largely on budget apart from the roof fund payment noted above. We had also generated a useful surplus of £118 on social functions. The year end bank balance was £2,994 and after creditors and reserves the club funds were £2,376. He thanked Graham Baum for carrying out an independent examination of the accounts in time for the AGM. His report can be found on the members only area of the website.

**1.1 Secretaries report:** Kelvin commented that it didn't seem possible that he had just completed his first year as club secretary, the year had gone so quickly but he had really enjoyed it. He thanked Mike Townsend, his first chairman, who had been a pleasure to work with, Fraser for his help and assistance with the transition, the committee for all their help, and the members who had read and responded to his years' worth of emails. He reported on some facts and figures for the year: At the time of the last AGM the club had 28 members, but very sadly Colin Chave passed away shortly after the meeting. During the year four new members had joined, Clive Dunning, Richard Holyhead, Geoff Thomas, and Stephen Wheeler, increasing the membership to 31. Additionally, Graham Mawdsley had joined at the meeting and was welcomed to the club. Kelvin updated the members on what had been done during the year to increase the membership including regular articles in local Parish magazines, attendance at the Newent Spring Fayre and printing of A5 flyers. He confirmed that the Committee had reviewed the Club Rules and Guidance Notes Booklet and had agreed that it didn't need updating, and that the Membership Names and Addresses Booklet would be updated and issued in early June. Finally, he said that he was looking forward to his next year as Secretary and working with Fraser, his second Chairman.





**Appointment of New Chairman:** Mike took great pleasure handing over the Chairmans badge of Office to the new Chairman, Fraser Gunn. Fraser thanked Mike for the work he had done over the past year, ensuring the club continued to thrive and develop. He commented that after 8 years as Secretary and a year as Vice Chairman it was an honour to take on the “top job”. He mentioned several initiatives that he intended to investigate during his year in office, including a car treasure hunt, celebration of wives / partners birthdays, possibly by including something in the monthly newsletters, inclusion of “for sale or freecycle items” in the newsletter and “new members” brief introduction talks.

**Vote of Thanks to the Committee:** Nigel Thompson gave a vote of thanks to the Committee for all their work over the last year and this was supported by a round of applause from the members.

**Election of Officers:** The following members were appointed:

Chairman: Fraser Gunn  
Vic-Chairman: Mike Warburton  
Secretary: Kelvin Ashby  
Treasurer: Mike Warburton

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Programme Secretary: Fraser Gunn  
Past Chairman: Mike Townsend  
Webmaster: Ray McCairn  
Social Secretary: David Clowes  
Supernumerary Member: John Martin  
Supernumerary Member: John Weeden  
Supernumerary Member: Andrew Graham

### **ASSOCIATED APPOINTMENTS:**

Special Lunches: John Martin  
Newsletter Editor: Fraser Gunn  
Raffle Organiser: Chris Lathan

### **TECHNICAL SUPPORT TEAM:**

John Franklin  
Ray McCairn  
David Clowes  
Mike Townsend

**Entertainment:** As there was to be no speaker, members were entertained by some short talks from members.

**Mike Townsend** told members about his trip to Moscow with Jane in 1995, where Jane's brother Paul was the manager of a 5-star hotel, The Olympic Penta Hotel. He showed and described a series of photographs taken on the trip including The Kremlin, Bolshoi Ballet, Lenin's Tomb, and the interiors of some of the metro stations. He concluded by telling everyone that the weather was so bad in the UK on his return that the flight was diverted from Heathrow to Manchester to refuel, and when he eventually got home, they were suffering from a power cut.

**Kelvin Ashby** told members about the three industries that he had been involved with in his career as a mechanical engineer. His early career from 1966 to 1972 as an apprentice in the pneumatics industry, his move into the hydraulic industry from 1972 to 1982, and his final move into the fenestration industry from 1982 until his retirement. He concentrated on a particular period in 1974 when he worked as a project engineer on the development of a high-pressure cleaning machine to remove rubber deposits from airfield runways. He told the story of how he and two colleagues were arrested at gunpoint by the US military police at RAF Alconbury where they were contracted to clean the runway. Luckily, they were not shot and lived to tell the tale.

**John Martin** told the members about some of his interests: Air Traffic Control (ATC), clocks, planes, and cars. He described how he started as an apprentice radio and TV service technician and how this led to an interest in and a career in Air Traffic Control with NATS. He explained how he then studied physics at Brighton Technical College, moved to an ATC role in London, before applying for an ATC position in Brussels, although he had very little experience of travelling let alone living outside the UK. After 2 ½ years in Brussels he was persuaded to take up another position in Germany where he lived for a further 2 ½ years before returning home to the UK where he continued to work in ATC until he took early retirement in 1996. He also told everyone about an eventful trip that he and two others made to Rumania in a lorry loaded with supplies donated by a charity appeal from his local church. After several adventures, they arrived safely with all their supplies intact.

**Peter Hines** treated members to a fascinating story about his grandfather who was born in what is now Czechoslovakia. He was an ambitious young man, looking to better himself, and he moved to Vienna in the 1890's where he met and married a Viennese girl who was a relative of the famous composer, Gustav Mahler. They had a son Gustav Heinz (unpronounceable Czechoslovakian surname, Czeczowitzka), Peter's father. Peter explained how things in Vienna became very difficult, especially for the Jewish community, when the German annexation of Austria, The Anschluss, took place in 1938, and his father managed to leave and come to England. Unfortunately, when the Second World War started people from Germany and Austria were viewed with suspicion by the British government, and many young men, including Peter's father, were transported to the Isle of Man. Peter explained how many of these men were then allowed to join the Pioneer Corps in the British army, and his father volunteered. At very short notice some government officials visited these men and offered them the chance to change their names if they wished to a more anglicised name before they signed up. Peter explained that his father had never liked his name Gustav, so when the government official asked him to give his name, he gave his second name, Heinz. This was written down as it sounded to the official, Hines, and logged as his surname. When asked for his Christian name, his father, who's English was not very good, gave one of the few names he could quickly remember which was Henry. So, he became Henry Hines, and from that moment Peter's family surname became Hines.



## “Why women wear makeup”

Have you ever wondered why 50% , give or take, of the Human race feel the need to cover their face with a mixture of dye stuff, animal fat and Lord knows what else before venturing out into the open air?

The answer lies way back before recorded history , back in the time around the discovery of fire and that cave made a half decent habitation.

Life then for the average cave woman was short, nasty and brutish. Man was the hunter, while Woman's role, when she wasn't breeding, or sometimes even concurrently, was cooking the prey that the hunters has killed and even sharing the left overs if she was lucky.

However, one day, one of the sisters scratched her face of a rough cave wall. There being no hot and cold running water, other than what seeped through the roof of the caves of that era, she cleaned herself the best she could, alive to the fact the Ugg, her man would be back shortly and would expect a nice joint of sabre toothed tiger to be ready for him to eat.

To her surprise, instead of the customary kick, she was rewarded by a succulent piece of gristle adhering to the bone. Sure enough, every time she smeared some dried blood on her face the result was the same and soon she learnt to use red berries instead..

Then one day another epiphany . A fruitless day's hunting meant an empty stomach for Ugg and a punch for the She-Ugg which gave her a black eye to end all black eyes. Ugg had a notorious short memory span so her had forgotten that he had beaten here. Instead he complimented her on her eye shadow and suggested she colour the other one too. Unwilling to brave another punch, she smeared some ash from the defunct fire on the cave floor on both eyes and on seeing her reflection in the pool of water outside the cave thought herself delighted with the result and looked forward to perhaps a leftover piece of meat from Ugg's prey.

Zogg Hayes



Where is I?

## An Appeal on behalf of our Treasurer



For those who have not yet paid their Annual Subscription please let Mike have your payment as soon as possible

Please do not circulate outside of our club to avoid issues with copyright



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

Ed