



PROBUS



RECORDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET
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Our usual out-of-club meeting at the Slade Cafe in Gillingham on a Friday is as popular as ever. Last Friday saw 11 of us gathered there despite the torrential rain & hail showers. Rolls Bridge Lane was flooded on my walk home! Conversation is varied and makes up for the lack of time after the talks at the Rugby Club to immerse oneself in a chat and a pint. The bar has been sadly less well attended of late, a shame! Of course, our Tuesday Zoom meetings are still quite well attended, and we sometimes get to see and talk to our Honorary Members in Scotland and Torquay. It's always good to see them.

We all put the clocks forward 1 hour to BST last weekend, and so summer 'Holidays' beckon. Gardening also comes to the fore now, with shrubs & trees bursting into leaf & flowers cheering the landscape & gardens. I have got my solar-powered (and eco-friendly) waterwheel out of its winter quarters and placed it ready for connecting once the grass is cut (when it dries out). Let's hope for a reasonable summer this year; not too hot or cold, and the occasional amount of rain to keep things well-watered.

I had a call from an ex-member this morning asking about Horace who he'd been trying to ring to no avail. As I had an appointment at Peacemarsh surgery I decided to walk round to Horace's place on my way home. I was spotted standing at his front door by a very nice lady neighbour and we had a long chat about Horace. It turns out he has been in Yeovil hospital since last Tuesday under investigation, so let's hope all turns out well for him and he will be at our meeting next week.

Just a reminder that the AGM has reverted to its original date of **Tuesday May 16th** due to a change of holiday commitments.

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare – Roger Ellis

Our Chairman has referred to Horace in his piece, and of course this is a concern to all Club members. Just to say I hope his son David will keep us informed as to his father's progress and we will email all of you as soon as we have more news.

The Chairman and I (i.e. Rog²) have heard from Chris Gibbs, and it is hoped that he will be able to join us again at some time in the future. Our best wishes go to Chris and Ann.

Both the Chairman and I do try to keep track of members when they are absent from the Club for a few meetings, and needless to say this is not just to elicit subscriptions - although if you remember The Godfather films this is not a bad idea!

Social – Lunches – Roger Ellis

I am currently looking for a venue for the May lunch, which is the last one I will be organising

after many years, and we may return to The Ship at West Stour - if they can look after us. The event at the Udder Farm Shop was nice and the staff particularly helpful. Such an atmosphere makes a great difference, and I wish other establishments would learn to treat their customers in the same way.

Looking forward!

Members will be delighted to know that Nick has let me write an article for the April Recorder on rail travel around Europe complete with illustrations. No need to thank me personally, but a round of applause at the appropriate meeting would be welcome!

Keep well!

Social - Future Club Events - Editor

<p>Tuesday 4th April 2023</p>	<p>‘Black Rod & an Insight to Behind the Scenes in Parliament - The Palace of Westminster’ --- <i>Lieutenant General David Leakey</i></p>
<p>Tuesday 18th April 2023</p>	<p>‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ <i>Paul Hooley</i> --- Wives/Partners Invitation Day (There is a lunch this day, but no details are available at the time of publication.)</p>



REPORTS ON OUR JANUARY TALKS

‘Gillingham Deserves Better’

Malcolm Briggs – 7 March 2023

Malcolm recently moved to Gillingham after a career in banking and marketing. He bought a house in Freame Way knowing that the proposed development next to the Mellows nursing home had been turned down. Then followed further planning applications. Having no background in planning he joined the local group ‘Gillingham Deserves Better’ which was organising opposition to the development.

Traditionally house building was a local affair with cottages built on patches of land along the edge of fields or tracks. Then came cottages built for farm workers on large farms and country estates. The industrial revolution saw cotton mills, potteries and factories with the more philanthropic owners building rows of houses for their workers. Elsewhere in towns and cities much of the housing stock was poorly built in an ad hoc way that led to slum areas. The first Housing Act of 1885 was passed to try and introduce better conditions with organised drainage systems and water supplies. Larger industrial developments were accompanied by new townships for the employees with schools and libraries, e.g. Bourneville and Saltaire. There followed the creation of garden cities such as Welwyn Garden City, all built privately. But generally, estates were built from the impulse to house the growing numbers of city



dwellers in regimented terraces and then further out of the towns in ribbon development along main roads and railway lines as detached (mock-Tudor) houses, e.g. Metroland.



House building peaked in the late 1920s and early 30s. Green belts were introduced in 1938 to limit the spread of urban areas into the county side. Post war, new towns were planned and built initially to rehouse people from the bombed cities, e.g. Basildon. Then to cater for the growing population, e.g. Milton Keynes. All these were architecturally planned with all the required amenities of shops, railway station, bus routes and hospitals etc.

Gillingham was a small farming village until the coming of the railway which allowed industrial development and a growth in housing, but still located around the high street. In the sixties and early-seventies the influx of people from towns and cities, mainly retirees, was catered for by local builders on farmland close to the town. As this trend grew, farmers around the town sold off their land for more development, mainly bungalows in small estates.

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act formalised the process of planned housing areas with a required planning permission monitored and controlled by the Local Authority.

House building grew to about 600,000 per year in the late sixties, much of it council housing. However, following declines in the economy, the Thatcher government allowed the selling-off of council houses to boost local authorities budgets. This was coupled with vast reductions in government subsidies, leading to a dramatic slowing of house building. The government had to encourage the private sector house builders to fill the gap. There followed further government involvement to boost house building numbers by constantly tinkering with the planning legislation which has led to the situation we have today where the system is skewed very much in favour of the big house building companies.

There has always been a demand for more homes even though it is unclear how many are actually required. It is true that housing is too expensive, and that young people struggle to get into the market. The belief is that more houses will lower prices, but to achieve this there needs to be an oversupply and what house builder will do that! The government wants 300,000 new houses per year (with 25% being “social housing” i.e. cheaper homes - mainly for rent). These figures constantly vary according to the political climate at the time. At present about 200,000 new houses are being built per year but “social housing” has slumped to just 7,000 per year, although there may be up to 130,000 where local authorities are involved through subsidies and grants.

How many new houses are actually needed is unknown. There may be enough already, but less expensive homes are most definitely under-supplied.

The [National House Building Policy Framework](#) allows for presumed development permission in favour of “sustainable development”. Note: there is no clear definition of “sustainable development”.

Neighbourhood Plans are required from all local authorities to allocate areas suitable for housing, but there is insufficient funding for these. Many are late and as they need revising every two years, always out of date.

The government is effectively dictating housing numbers for each part of the country. In addition, high density urban area can shift a portion of their required numbers onto less dense areas, e.g. Bournemouth can add 2,000 houses to the north Dorset area.

In the recent past housing design was influenced by local design guides and the Parker Morris spatial standards. These guidelines have now disappeared.

If the local plan is out of date, a housing developer then has carte blanche to apply for planning permission in any location.

In Gillingham, the southern extension development area is part of the local plan, but building has hardly started. Therefore the North Dorset area housing requirement has not been met, and other developers again are able to apply for permission elsewhere on surrounding land, whether it is in the plan or not. If the scheme can be shown to be “sustainable development”, then granting planning permission is assumed. The big house builders have become expert in showing compliance with the rules and therefore will always get planning permission.

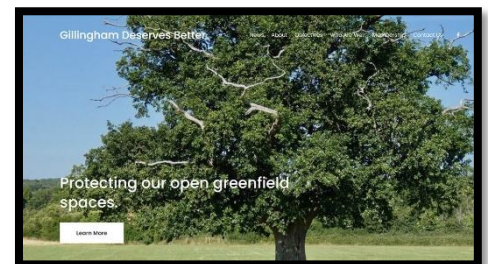
Local planning departments are under-funded and understaffed, and thus become overwhelmed by the number of applications. In addition to this, the rules require them to deal with an application within 8 weeks from submission to decision. Objectors (you and me?!) have just three weeks to lodge their objections, which must be valid in planning terms. Loss of amenity, increase in traffic; potential flooding; lack of health services etc, etc and even excess housing density don't count (or can be countered by the developers' compliance strategy which has been compiled by companies who are expert in doing just this. If a scheme is refused permission by the local authority, the developer can appeal to the Central Government planning department. They have 6 months to do so, and they have the resources to counter any objections (these appeal costs can also be subsidised by the government - i.e. the tax payer). Once the appeal is allowed, there is no mechanism for the objectors to appeal against the decision. The only route is to apply for a judicial review in the courts, which is an expensive business once lawyers and barristers are engaged.

Last year, the 30+ largest house building companies made a combined profit of over £4.5billion. Their directors and senior staff are rewarded in line with their company profits. All government committees that frame the planning regulations have housing developer participation. The house building industry donates millions to the political parties, in particular to the Conservative Party.

[Gillingham Deserves Better Group.](#)

The aim of the ‘*Gillingham Deserves Better*’ group is to:

- Try to influence the Government to amend planning legislation in order to make it fairer for all parties concerned (including you and me).
- To build a ‘war chest’ to support legal challenges to unwanted developments. Such legal challenges elsewhere in the country have often proved successful.
- Above all, the Group wants more people to be aware of the current planning situation, and to get involved in any way they can.



After Note. The forthcoming ‘[Levelling Up and Regeneration](#)’ Bill (currently in its Committee stage in the House of Lords), seeks to redraft the National Planning Policy Framework to include design codes for housing; a new infrastructure levy; street votes for neighbourhoods, and a requirement for “well designed and beautiful” proposals. We shall see....

Report: Alan Poulter



‘The London to Brighton Veteran Car Run’

Peter Hurst – 21 March 2023

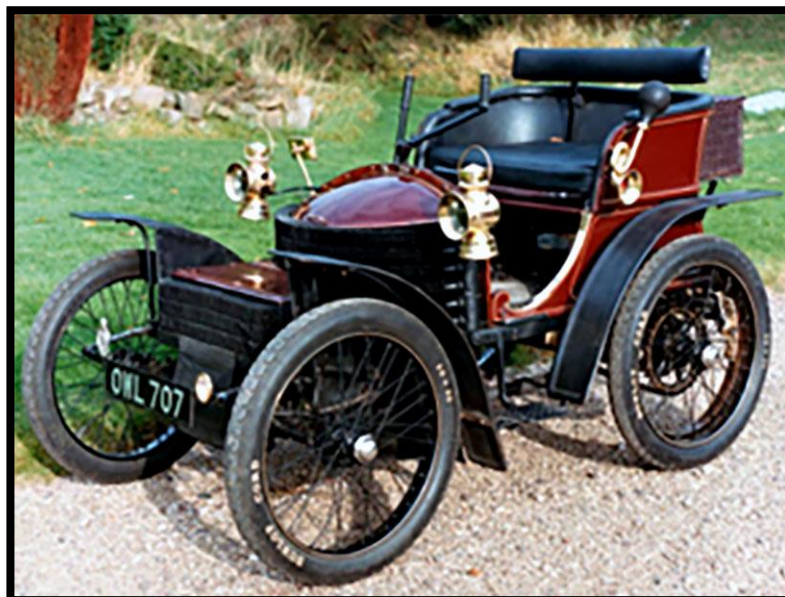
Our Branch member Peter Hurst drove in the event twice, once in 2009 and again in 2010. He brought along some of the accessories he wore during the run: a Flat cap; goggles; gloves, and a brochure from the run which pictured all the vehicles taking part and their specifications.

The event started on November 14th 1896 as the Emancipation Run, to celebrate the repeal of the Locomotives on Highways Act which limited cars to 4mph in the country and 2mph in towns, with a man carrying a red flag ahead of the vehicle (although this requirement was soon dropped as being dangerous to the man concerned). The run is always started by a symbolic tearing in half of a red flag.

The run has been organised by the RAC since 1927 and is only open to ‘veteran’ cars built before 1905. It starts in Hyde Park at 7.30 am on a Sunday morning and progresses down the A23 to Preston Park in Brighton, ending at 4.30pm. Then the cars proceed to the promenade for a ceremonial finishing line and are parked for display.

Most of the cars are privately owned or from museums around the world. Their average value is in excess of £200,000. [The British Motor Museum](#) at Gaydon provides six cars from its collection to sponsors for a fee. The Museum also provides mechanical support, transport and driver training with a curator to ride alongside the driver. The cars travel amongst the everyday traffic and in all weathers. In 2009 Fujitsu took all six cars for some of their clients to drive which included Peter.

Peter’s car was an 1899 Wolseley Voiturette (small car), 1300cc petrol engine of 4bhp, made in Birmingham by an Australian company that made sheep-shearing equipment. It was thus 110 years old at the time.



The Birmingham factory was run by Herbert Austin who went on to start his own company, Austin Motors, and one of its models was called the Wolseley.

The 1953 film, Genevieve is an exciting portrayal of the event, not filmed on the roads to Brighton, but around the studio at Elstree.

Peter showed a short video of himself driving on that wet and windy morning- he was wet through by the time they reached Buckingham Palace. The run was not without incident. The car spluttered to a halt twice when it got too hot. With only three gears, no clutch and belt drive and just a bicycle type brake on the rear wheels and tiller steering, the car was difficult to drive (and to stop!) The handbrake was a rubber block acting on a rear tyre. Progress was sedate and when Peter's hat blew off, presumed lost forever, a passing cyclist recovered it, caught up and passed the car, giving the hat back.

Hammer Hill near Horsham was too steep for the car, so they had to get out and walk alongside. Everywhere there were volunteers to give a hand pushing or towing broken down cars. Once at the top it was all downhill, but the brakes soon failed! As the car picked up speed, Peter had to decide a course of action. On one side of the road was a ditch, on the other a field hedge. The museum curator sitting beside him asked "what's your plan?" "Well, I could use the hedge to slow the car" he said. "OK, but don't scratch the paintwork" came the reply. However, they reached the bottom of the hill without resorting to emergency action.

On the Brighton ring-road the car came to a dead stop, this time with a broken valve spring. The support vehicle was soon on hand and the mechanic fixed it at the side of the road.

A refreshment stop was provided along the way where Peter sat next to Ed China from the Wheeler-Dealers programme, who said he was too big at 6'7" with size 14 feet to drive these old cars. However, some years later the Wheeler-Dealers did enter a car, a 1904 Darracq, and Ed managed to drive it - albeit with some discomfort. Peter showed a hilarious video from the resulting TV programme.

Peter did eventually reach the finishing line on Brighton promenade, to be interviewed and awarded a commemorative framed picture and plaque which he displayed. 170 cars competed.



A year later Fujitsu repeated their sponsorship of the run. As one of the drivers was unable to attend, they asked Peter if he would like to do it again. This time he drove a 1904 Thornycroft open top tourer, 3600cc four-cylinder engine of 28 bhp with decent brakes and sufficient power.



The weather was fine and sunny for the run which was completed without mishap apart from the car overheating in the queue at the finishing line.

On the 2022 run 345 cars competed. Parp! Parp!

After questions, the Chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs



TRAVEL TIPS — *Roger Ellis*

How to travel by train to and around Europe

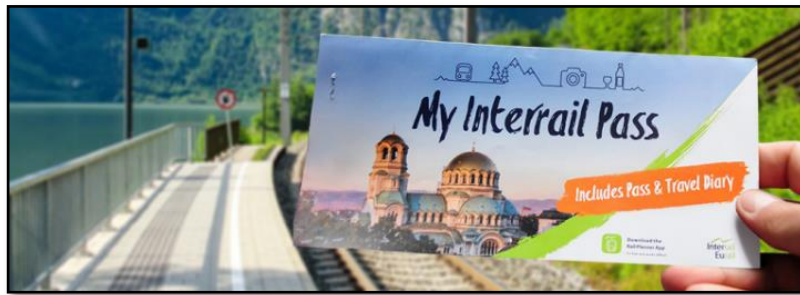
Nobody has asked me about the above subject, but I thought I would write a short article anyway, and thereby hope to provide another way of looking at getting to and around Europe.

Most people these days go to an airport and fly to their appointed destination, but once there never think about travelling around independently because it is easier to rely on the company who arranged the package deal.

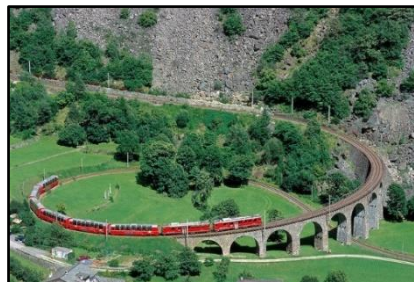
However – have you ever thought of getting away from the hassle of airports and going by rail? There are two specialist companies that organise rail holidays in Europe (and to other destinations), namely '[Great Rail Journeys](#)' and their budget subsidiary, '[Rail Discoveries](#)'. They are both excellent, but they do have set itineraries for their clients, which you might feel obliged to take up because you have paid for them as a part of the package. However, I understand there is an invention called the "internet", and even to a novice it is easy to arrange hotel accommodation, tickets and reservations. Once you are in your chosen country, travelling around can be simple.



In Country Travel - Pre-UK Departure Purchase. Let me pick the following examples, for which you need to purchase a ‘**Senior Interrail One Country Pass**’ before you go.



- **Switzerland.** The Pass is valid for 8 days rail travel within Switzerland and costs:
 - 2nd Class: £215
 - 1st Class: £273
 - The Pass is not valid on normal Mountain railways, but is valid on the following:
 - ❖ Zermatt - St Moritz (Glacier Express)
 - ❖ St Moritz - Tirano (Bernina Express)



- **Austria.** The system and costs and for Austria are the same as those Switzerland.
- **Italy.**
 - 2nd Class: £200
 - 1st Class: £254



- **Reservations.** No reservations are necessary for high-speed trains in Switzerland, but they are necessary for Austria and Italy, but cost only a few Euro's each.
- **Other Countries.** ‘**One Country**’ passes are available for most other countries in Europe, and for shorter or longer periods than the 8 days mentioned above.

'No Fly' Travel to and within Europe. Should you not wish to fly at all, then you can travel to Europe via Eurostar from London St Pancras for which the following are available.

- **Interrail Global Pass.** This is valid for travel in 33 countries in Europe, and also gives you discounted fares on Eurostar. Costs depend on the period chosen, two of which are given here.
 - **'7-Day Senior Interrail Global Pass'.** The cost of the Pass at the time of writing is:
 - 2nd Class: £279
 - 1st Class: £353
 - The discounts for a single Eurostar journey are approximately:
 - 2nd Class: from £28
 - 'Standard Premier': £37
 - **'10-day Senior Interrail Global Pass'.**
 - 2nd Class: £315
 - 1st Class: £420
 - A further advantage of the Global Pass is that you can use the pass on your journey from Gillingham to London and return, and you can get to or from either Brussels or Paris in a day to start or finish your holiday.
 - Buy a 10-day pass and you have therefore 8 days to explore Europe, from either Brussels or Paris.

Sleeper Trains. Before we had Global Warming - or rather before it became an issue - most European countries abandoned overnight sleeper trains, but now the position has reversed and there is an expansion of these services. Even the French, who maintained a few sleeper services thanks to financial support from their Regions, have re-introduced the Paris-Nice and subsidise the thrice weekly Paris-Vienna train. From Brussels there is overnight train to Vienna via Innsbruck, both destinations being delightful.



Travel from Home. With the growth of high-speed railways, Eurostar, the French TGV and the German ICE, many European cities can be reached in a day from the UK - even including travel for Gillingham. For example:

- **Gillingham-Zurich:**
 - Depart: 09.18
 - Arrive: 22.26
- **Gillingham-Amsterdam:**
 - Depart: 08.51
 - Arrive: 18.44

(N.B. Arrival times in Europe are of course plus one hour of GMT.)

Train travel is not without its problems, such as late arrivals and missed connections, and as you all know every air flight is always on time and waiting at airports is so much fun!

*As I said at the last meeting, if you need help ask your
Uncle Roger!*

ENDPIECE – Editor

Women's Quips

An old lady was standing at the railing of the cruise ship holding her hat on tightly so that it would not blow off in the wind. A gentleman approached her and said: "*Pardon me, madam. I do not intend to be forward, but did you know that your dress is blowing up in this high wind?*"



"Yes, I know," said the lady, "*I need both hands to hold onto this hat.*"
"But, madam, you must know that your privates are exposed!" said the gentleman in earnest.

The woman looked down, then back up at the man and replied, "*Sir, anything you see down there is 85 years old. I just bought this hat yesterday!*"

Three old ladies were sitting side by side in their retirement home reminiscing. The first lady recalled shopping at the green grocers and demonstrated with her hands, the length and thickness of a cucumber she could buy for a penny. The second old lady nodded, adding that onions used to be much bigger and cheaper also, and demonstrated the size of two big onions she could buy for a penny a piece. The third old lady remarked, "*I can't hear a word you're saying, but I remember the guy you're talking about.*"

Two elderly women were out driving in a flashy car. Both could barely see over the dashboard. As they were cruising along, they came to an intersection. The stoplight was red, but they just went on through.

The woman in the passenger seat thought to herself, "*I must be losing it. I could have sworn we just went through the red light.*" After a few more minutes they came to another intersection, the light was red, and again they went right through. This time, the passenger was almost sure that the light had been red but was also concerned that she might be seeing things.

She was getting nervous and decided to pay very close attention. At the next intersection, sure enough, the light was definitely red, and they blew right through it. She turned to the other woman and said, "*Mildred! Did you know that you ran through three red lights in a row? You could have killed us!*" Mildred turned to her and said, "*Oh Shit! Am I driving?*"

