



PROBUS RECORDER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET
(www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk)

Issue No. 225
October 2023

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – Colin Chamberlain

Well, it looks as though we are now well and truly into Autumn – back to the cool and the storms. At least we have been lucky enough to enjoy the better weather for our recent outings – to Shillingstone and to Kimmeridge, for which I thank the organisers.

Looking forward, we have some interesting talks this month, albeit with an understandable late change, and I hope that before too long we can also enjoy tales of adventure and misdeeds from some of those members who have not yet told us about their previous lives.

Lastly, I apologise for not making the last meeting (thanks to Ron Walker for standing in at very short notice) – and I look forward to seeing you all again in the near future.

*(On behalf of us all, wishing you and Enid all the very best.
- Ed)*

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare – John Owen

It has been reported that ex member Peter Nation died recently. Peter had been ill for some time and had suffered serious physical challenges following damaging head injuries from an accident while abroad.

We also learned that Paul Hooley's wife Helen sadly passed away suddenly, last week. Paul has asked me to give his thanks and appreciation for all the messages of condolence he has received.

I visited Tom Brain this week and he continues to battle on despite having a few falls recently. Peter Bonson is rapidly reading through all the books and magazines he can lay his hands on and is being well looked after by his wife Freda and the carers who visit daily. Visitors and/or telephone callers would be really appreciated as he can't get out and basically sees the same people every day. Quite a few members visited the Men's Health event at Rivers Meet and hopefully found it useful.

As you will probably appreciate, there are quite a few members and partners currently needing our thoughts.

Now for something a bit lighter.....

The beauty of owning a dog!!

- A dog's mother-in-law is unlikely to ever visit.
- No matter how late you are coming home, a dog is always happy to see you.
- Dogs find drunk people amusing.
- Dogs love it when you take them fishing or to play football.
- If a dog has babies, you can advertise them for sale!!!!
- If a dog smells another dog on you, it finds it interesting.
- No dog will wake you up in the middle of the night to ask you whether you'd get another dog should it die.
- If your dog leaves for another home, it doesn't take half your house with it!

Social - Future Club Events in September - Editor

3rd October 2023	<i>Talk - The Geology of North Dorset</i> John Whicher
17th October 2023	<i>Talk – 'La Vie Militaire'</i> David Leakey
31st October 2023	<i>Talk – Donald Campbell</i> Phil Holt <i>Plus</i> Lunch – The Hunters Lodge (12.30 for 1.00pm)



REPORTS ON OUR SEPTEMBER TALKS

'The Great Bustard.'

Philip Tryner - 5th September 2023



Philip Tryner is a volunteer with the Great Bustard Group. The group was established by David Waters MBE in 1998, with the aim of re-establishing a population of Great Bustards in the UK. Believed to be originally a native species, the bird was hunted to extinction in the 19th century.



The Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) is the world's heaviest flying bird; a verified figure for a specimen collected in Manchuria was 21 Kg – 3 Stones and 4.3lbs. Their shape when flying is similar to a large goose, but larger and with longer legs and a straightened neck. The weight of a standard mature male can range up to 18kg; with females about a third smaller. The male standing height is between 90-115cm.

The Great Bustard in flight was a fixture in the UK until the mid-1800's, when the species became a target for Victorian trophy hunters, and its natural habitat was destroyed by farmers. As a result, the Great Bustard is a missing piece of UK wildlife heritage, artificially removed from the ecosystem and threatened with extinction. Created in 1998, [the Great Bustard Group](#) is on a mission to save this beautiful bird, reintroducing it to the wild and campaigning for increased protection from man-made and natural threats. Soon after the group was formed, the (then) HRH the Prince of Wales lent his support to the project and became its Patron.



The Great Bustard Group maintains a protected central site on Salisbury Plain; there are also four private release sites on farming land.

The Great Bustard is a ground-nesting bird, with nests being mere scrapes in the ground. Farmers participating in the release project work closely with the Great Bustard Group to ensure minimal disruption when harvesting.

Initially, chicks (and subsequently eggs) were sourced from Russia, but now eggs from Spain are used. Eggs are incubated at [Cotswold Wildlife Park](#). The first release of birds in the UK occurred in 2004. Spanish Great Bustards are genetically more similar to the former UK population, and the aim is to release a number of birds into the wild each year.

Currently the bustards now living in England number between 70-100 birds; the plan is to increase the number of birds on Salisbury Plain by a significant number, and to look for other suitable sites elsewhere in the UK. The collective name given to a group of bustards is a 'drove'.

Helpers at the protected site are required to 'de-humanise' themselves by wearing 'rearing suits' when looking after the birds, to avoid the latter becoming tame. The bird now features on the Wiltshire County flag.



Following Philip Tryner's talk with accompanying PowerPoint slides, Philip confirmed during the questions session that [day visits to Great Bustard Group](#) site near Amesbury to see the Great Bustards can be booked via the website, but that numbers for each visit are necessarily restricted.

Following questions, the Chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs

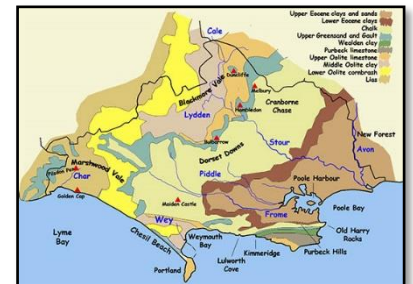
‘The Lost Villages of Dorset.’

Mike Spencer – 19 September 2023

Mike Spencer, who has spoken to our Probus Club before, gave a long and detailed talk describing how all localities continue to change over time.

The majority of Dorset villages were small at the time of the Domesday Book (1086) which was William the Conqueror’s audit of all England’s properties for taxation purposes and is the starting point for tracing the history of Dorset villages.

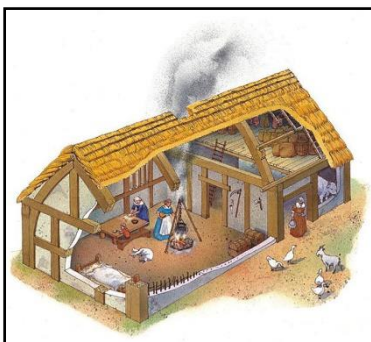
A geological map of Dorset shows the areas of differing soil types: Clay, Chalk, Sand and Limestone Rock. Most settlements on chalk were situated along rivers where the soil was better and occurred in distinct lines following the water courses. On clay soil, villages were wide spread avoiding areas of wet or forested land. Sandy and limestone areas had fewer homesteads due to their lack of water sources and arable soil.



Villages on chalk soils along rivers such as the Iwerne Vale, the Piddle Vale and the Cerne Valley prospered. Those that did not do so, only live on in the names of farms and manors.

Truly lost villages are still visible from aerial photographs which pick out the marks on the ground tracing trackways and old house plinths: “tofts” and their small fields: “crofts”, for example at Holworth near Osmington on the south coast. These features can be seen at ground level near rivers, streams or ancient ponds as the hollows of the main street and the mounds of house sites, as well as in furrows in the fields. Those in clay soil are often deeply worn hollows as at Baldorton [or at the Old Hollow track in Mere].

In Purbeck - near Corfe Castle - lies a valley formed from a wide strip of clay soil between ridges of limestone. Here there were more villages (9) than in all the surrounding limestone areas. However, all have now vanished leaving the names of farms as their only means of location.



Medieval dwellings were built as single internal spaces on slight slopes with the living area higher than that for the animals so that their secretions could flow out onto the adjacent croft land. Where farmsteads prospered, the larger longhouse emerged and soon a church was built, the only building constructed from local stone. If the village fell into decline, the church would be the only relic of the village, e.g. Knowlton church built within a henge earthwork near Wimborne St. Giles. At Tarrant Crawford the isolated church contains



medieval wall paintings. Siltton with its church, north west of Gillingham, remains where Wyndham’s Oak and manor farm mark the centre of the lost village. At Dewlish near Puddletown an ancient pond, mounds in the ground and a church are all that remain.

The population of Mapperton near Bridport declined as a result of the Black Death, and ‘Deadman’s Lane’ is the only indication that there was once a village there.



Agricultural changes gave rise to larger farms and manor estates, with the building of farm workers' cottages while the original village disappeared. The creation of landed estates such as Milton Abbas also affected the landscape. Here a stately house was built next to the ruined abbey and the original village was demolished,



in order to be moved out of sight of the big house. The estate workers cottages that were built as a result of this now form the centre of the picturesque village.

The building of turnpike roads which by-passed smaller villages led to the villages' decline as the population move to be next to the road for better communications to markets, e.g. at Compton Abbas south of Shaftesbury off the A350 to Blandford, where the ruins of the church tower remain down a small lane.

The growth of towns often swallowed up villages and hamlets which are only now known as district names - as in Weymouth.

Other causes of villages being abandoned include fire, flooding, the plague and natural disasters. (The 'tsunami' from the Severn estuary in the 13th century wiped out many settlements.)



Military use in the last century (20th) claimed Tyneham village.

Holwell parish between Sherborne and King's Stag is an example of changes over time. The village suffered the plague, then the enclosures of surrounding lands in 1773, and the building of the local turnpike road. Only



the church and a farm remain with the village name on a post-box at Barnes Cross.

This was an interesting talk, which was followed in the normal way by questions. Members showed their appreciation, and the chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Poulter



SEPTEMBER VISITS

Shillingstone Station – 6th September

A group of members and their wives paid a visit to the ‘**North Dorset Railway**’ at Shillingstone Station on Wednesday 6th September, which turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year. Nothing daunted, we were greeted and shown around by Gavin Collins and some of the other Volunteers, all of whom were most informative regarding the Station’s history and what the Railway hopes to accomplish in the next five to ten years.



The tour was very thorough and included being shown around the Signal Box and the Locomotive Shed. For a small payment we were offered a drink on our arrival and a sandwich lunch in the renovated buffet carriage and, as we were not charged for the tour, our Probus Treasurer was pleased to give the Railway a cheque towards their much-needed funds.



I can recommend a visit to the Station at Shillingstone. All of us were very impressed by the helpful attitude of the volunteers and by the welcome we received.

Roger Ellis - Organiser

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

The Etches Collection – 18th September.

Eight members and partners travelled to Kimmeridge to visit [the Etches Collection](#) on the above date. It was certainly a little further than we might ordinarily travel, but well worth the effort. We were delighted to be offered the group rate of £6.50 per person and a few of us took up the annual ticket extension of £2.50 that gives free access for the next 12 months.

The fossil collection is housed in a purpose-built facility in the village of Kimmeridge and is exceptionally well done. The building itself one could write a lot more about; as a new build it blends perfectly into the setting, with numerous environmentally friendly aspects.

On arrival we saw [Dr Steve Etches MBE](#), whose collection this is, - and did so many times throughout our visit - testament as to how ‘hands on’ he still is in this remarkable testament to one person’s passion. He began this passion at the age of 5, with a small fossil (I believe an ammonite) that is on display in the collection. Many decades later his drive and enthusiasm has brought to life a world class collection of Kimmeridge-age specimens from the Jurassic Period (the geological time period 157.3 and 152.1 million years old).





The Etches Collection also housed a brilliant educational tool of a powerful microscope linked to a large screen TV. A few of us might have been happy to get lost on the wonders of that for an hour or so, and so I could certainly see young minds being captivated by the discoveries that it unfolded.

Additionally, there was also an exhibition in another room in the building, by [Caz Scott](#) a full-time artist dividing her time between her Dorset studio and Falmouth, Cornwall, an example of her work being shown here.



Following this a very pleasant, relaxing lunch was had at [Clavell's Restaurant](#) immediately opposite the Collection; out of season and on a sunny day, the experience was a delight. We chose a table for 8 and had a lively discussion on what we most enjoyed about the displays - and of course put the world to right with like-minded folk.

It was well worth the trip, and it was felt that it was worth making a long day of the whole experience. Alas, we didn't venture the extra few hundred metres to the sea, but with a little more time this would have rounded off the day perfectly.

Mike Madgwick - Organiser



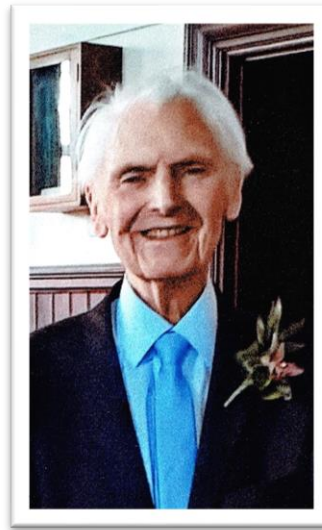
ENDPIECE – *Editor*

Farewells

David Bryan. I feel that members will want to know that David's funeral in Scotland was well represented - at a distance - by members of our Club. They 'attended' the funeral on line, and heartfelt salutations to David were demonstrated at the bar following the service and were later well received by David's widow Daphne.



Malcolm Cole. The accompanying photograph was unavailable at the time of our last publication, but I hope it will serve to provide warm feelings for those who remember Malcolm, as well as 'hail and farewell' for those of us who didn't.



@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

And now for something different

For Lovers of Puns

Dad, are we pyromaniacs? - Yes, we arson.

What do you call a pig with laryngitis? - Disgruntled.

Why do bees stay in their hives during winter? - Swarm.

If you're bad at haggling, you'll end up paying the price.

Just so everyone's clear, I'm going to put my glasses on.

A commander walks into a bar and orders everyone around.

I lost my job as a stage designer. I left without making a scene.

Never buy flowers from a monk. Only you can prevent florist friars.

How much did the pirate pay to get his ears pierced? - A buccaneer.

I once worked at a cheap pizza shop to get by. I kneaded the dough.

My friends and I have named our band 'Duvet'. - It's a cover band.

I lost my girlfriend's audiobook, and now I'll never hear the end of it.

Why is 'dark' spelled with a k and not c? - Because you can't see in the dark.

Why is it unwise to share your secrets with a clock? - Well, time will tell.

When I told my contractor I didn't want carpeted steps, they gave me a blank stare.

Bono and The Edge walk into a Dublin bar and the bartender says, "Oh no, not U2 again."

Prison is just one word to you, but for some people, it's a whole sentence.

Scientists got together to study the effects of alcohol on a person's walk, and the result was staggering.

I'm trying to organize a hide and seek tournament, but good players are really hard to find.

I got over my addiction to chocolate, marshmallows, and nuts. I won't lie, it was a rocky road.

What do you say to comfort a friend who's struggling with grammar? - There, their, they're.

I went to the toy store and asked the assistant where the Schwarzenegger dolls are and he replied, - "Aisle B, back."

What did the surgeon say to the patient who insisted on closing up their own incision? - Suture self.

I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. - It's all about raisin awareness.

Boom, Boom!!