



# PROBUS RECORDER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET  
([www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk](http://www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk))

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## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – Colin Chamberlain

Aren't you glad you live in Dorset, not up North, or in Scotland or Wales! We moan about the rain we have here when it sweeps in off the Atlantic and we are its first port of call, but it normally carries on moving North or East leaving us with better weather and nothing like the flooding caused by Storm Babet.

The Funeral of Helen Hooley was held on Friday 20th October and was well attended by many Club members and Wives albeit after an early meeting for coffee at the Slade café, which made me realise how caring our Club is towards its members and their families. From a personal point of view, when help is needed there is always someone in the Club to hold out a helping hand or provide words of comfort.

The Menu for the Christmas dinner on 13th December at the Grange at Osborne is now on the Club website, along with details of timings and pickup-points for the coach, which can be found under '*Outings*'. It would be appreciated if *Menu choices* could be in **by 13th November** in order to allow us to respond to the Hotel by the 20th - as they have requested.

We are indebted to Mike Madgwick, our enthusiastic new Social Coordinator, for finding places to visit where we have never ventured before; such places as the local Sewage Works, and for organising a follow up speaker from Wessex Water for the meeting on 14th November. I would point out, if you did not already know, that when I was in business my firm was a 'preferred supplier' to Wessex Water.

Now - on the subject of Wessex Water in another form - comes Part 4 of '*IT PAYS TO COMPLAIN*' (see issues 220, 221 and 222 of the Recorder).

Since my last words in this series, I noticed one day that a kerb stone near my front door and adjacent to the water-meter opening in the pavement was damaged, and that it had dropped about 30mm at one end.

While considering where to go to for advice and who to contact, my new Water Bill arrived. Ah Ha, I thought, I will ring them and suggest it might be something to do with their meter, and lo and behold they agreed to investigate. Having looked at the problem they said it was not the meter, but they agreed to repair the kerb on behalf of Dorset Highways Department.

On the first day 3 vans turned up, one pulling a trailer with a small digger. After much head-scratching they realised they hadn't brought a new kerbstone, and one of the vans was despatched to collect a stone while the other two drivers proceeded to remove the tarmac and the damaged kerbstone with hand tools, ready to fit the new one when it arrived. Unfortunately they then realised they didn't have any tarmac with which to repair the pavement, but they told us someone would be along the next day to finish the job.

The next day 2 lorries arrived, both with tarmac, but after discussion and telephone calls they

decided 2 more kerbstones needed replacing and they also went away.

The following day a single van turned up towing a small roller and the correct number of kerbstones as well as the necessary tarmac and finished the job in a single morning.

It had taken 6 vehicles and 6 men to finally complete the repair, but – “*Well Done Wessex Water*” for perseverance!

## WELFARE & SOCIAL

### Welfare – John Owen

Michael Gray, who was an ex-member, has very sadly died. He moved to Tiverton to be closer to family about four years ago. His funeral was held in Exeter and was very well attended.

Jeffrey Hall has finished his treatment at Southampton Hospital and is now awaiting an appointment in November to find out the results. He feels pretty tired but is managing to get to church and an occasional walk to town. We hope that Jeffrey will be able to rejoin us before too long.

Those of us who attended Helen Hooley’s funeral witnessed a thoroughly moving eulogy given by Paul, and we offer our best wishes to Paul and his sons at this difficult time.

And now - for those who love anagrams:-

DORMITORY:	Dirty Room	THE MORSE CODE:	Here Come Dots
PRESBYTERIAN:	Best in Prayer	SLOT MACHINES:	Cash Lost In Me
ASTRONOMER:	Moon Starer	MOTHER IN LAW:	Woman Hitler
THE EYES:	They See	ELECTION RESULTS:	Lies Let’s Recount
A DECIMAL POINT:	I’m a Dot In Place	THE EARTHQUAKES:	That Queer Shake
ELEVEN PLUS TWO:	Twelve Plus One	GEORGE BUSH:	He Bugs Gore

### Social - November Club Events - Editor

14 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Talk</b> <i>Wessex Water</i> Matt Wheeldon</p>
15 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visit</b> <i>Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford</i> (Meet: 11am at Reception)</p>
28 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Talk</b> <i>Oil - What is its Future?</i> John Pett</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Christmas Lunch</b> Royal Chase Hotel, Shaftesbury (12.30 for 1.00pm)</p>



## REPORTS ON OUR OCTOBER TALKS

### The Geology Of North Dorset

**Dr John Whicher MA. MB. B.Chir. MSc. FRCPath. FGS – 3rd October 2023**

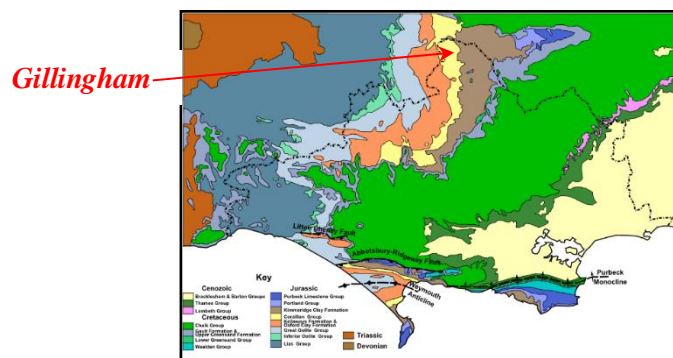


Kenneth Wilson introduced Dr John Whicher, who had kindly stepped in at short notice to give a talk on the geology of North Dorset, particularly in the area round Sherborne. John, who lives in Henstridge, is a keen aviator, and has photographed much of the local landscape from the



air. In his professional life as a professor of molecular pathology and cancer research, he was chair of Experimental Cancer Research at Leeds University.

John Whicher has been a keen amateur archaeologist and fossil hunter ever since his days as a young schoolboy in Sherborne. Over the years he has built up an impressive collection of Inferior Oolite Ammonites and, as a Fellow of the Geological Society and committee of the Dorset Geology Association, has written papers on Dorset geology and palaeontology.



The shape of the landscape is formed by the underlying geology, together with historical changes in climate and with erosion. The rocks of North Dorset belong to the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods of the Mesozoic era of geological time. The Jurassic lasted from about 190 million to 145 million years ago. The Cretaceous from 145 to 65 million years ago. Rocks in Dorset are rich in fossils due to the fact that in early Jurassic times before the continents in their present shape were formed, what is now southern England was below sea level. The depth of water varied from time to time, and the Jurassic period is divided into different periods to reflect this. Shallower water allowed the accumulation of limestones. Deeper water led to thicknesses of clay, such as Kimmeridge Clay.

Dr Whicher explained how the different rock formations had formed over the different periods of the Jurassic era; formations such as the Lower Lias; Bridport Sand (sandstone) reaching from West Bay to the Cotswolds; the *Inferior Oolite*<sup>1</sup> rock round Sherborne (rich in fossils); the Great Oolite group outcrops round Bath (giving the honey-coloured stone used in Bath architecture). The Oxford Clay formation is a Jurassic marine rock formation (evidenced in the formation of the Blackmore Vale).

The talk took us on a geological journey along the course of the A30. The variation of the countryside between hill and vale is due to the underlying geological structure formed over different periods of time, referred to by Joseph Fowler in his 1936 book *Sherborne Behind the*

<sup>1</sup> Oolite: a sedimentary rock formed from 'ooids', spherical grains composed of concentric layers.

Seen as 'bread and butter country', when he described the nature and scenery of Sherborne in relation to the underlying rocks.

Kimmeridge Clay dates from the late Jurassic to Cretaceous age – and is named after the village of Kimmeridge. The Wych farm oilfield in the Purbeck district – the largest onshore oilfield in western Europe - is located in a faulted block of Jurassic and older rocks in the Hampshire basin.



Frogden quarry on Sherborne Estate land, produces oolite sandy limestone from the Jurassic period. This is the type of stone used to build the majority of the older parts of Sherborne and nearby settlements. One interesting feature of the Sherborne stone (SBS) is the network of calcified pipe-like structures within the stone. These are Thalassinoids – the fossilised burrows of organisms from the Jurassic period. The Lillington quarry near Henstridge produces the harder Forest Marble stone.

*Members enjoyed the talk by an expert in his field, and it produced many questions. The chairman gave the vote of thanks, and we showed our appreciation in the usual way.*

*Alan Jeffs*

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## **‘La Vie Militaire.’**

***Lieutenant General David Leakey CMG CVO CBE – 17 October 2023***



*David Leakey was the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod in Parliament from February 2011 to February 2018; members will recall the talk he gave about his time in office (see Issue 220). This latest talk was about his thirty years' service in the British Army.*

### **Early Years**

Born into a military family (his father was a major general, and his late uncle had been awarded a VC), David, who attended Sherborne School, went on to Cambridge to take a degree in law. Although he was a university cadet, his intention was to become a lawyer. He decided to undertake a short period of military service before commencing a legal career; this 'short period' ended up lasting thirty years - including commanding the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment (RTR)!

Service in the army started with David attending the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. The army way of turning out good soldiers and officers from self-centred raw recruits to trained members of a team includes short haircuts, the same basic uniform as a private soldier; building physical strength and stamina; working under pressure; and building mental resilience. And, following this, regaining individual identity, developing character, and in the words of the RMA Sandhurst motto, to “serve to lead”.

### **Career**

David Leakey was commissioned into the Royal Tank Regiment in 1971. This was during the 'Cold War', and he explained that service in Germany meant that the Regiment was on

permanent notice to move out of barracks at 90 minutes notice. But at the same time there were good sporting facilities and a good social life.

Promotions followed, with postings to various countries – including Northern Ireland, Germany, Bosnia, Canada, and Cyprus. After promotion to major in 1984, Leakey was appointed chief of staff of the 7th Armoured Brigade (Germany), followed by appointment as commanding officer (CO) of the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment. Following this he was posted to the Ministry of Defence as a colonel, with responsibility for operational planning and policy in Eastern and Western Europe. A significant achievement was his role as the UK's military representative at the Dayton peace negotiations to end the Bosnian War. As a major general, in 2004 he commanded the European Union peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was promoted to lieutenant general in 2007, when he became Director General of the European Military Staff in Brussels. He retired from the army in 2010.

### **Memorable Moments**

As a Brigadier in Northern Ireland during the Belfast riots, his 'worst moment' was receiving a hit from a nail bomb, at which his clothes caught fire. He had found the hardest thing to deal with was the loss of members of the regiment, and the sad attendance at funerals of young soldiers.

The funniest moment came at the end of a short five-day early morning course to learn to ride for a passing-out parade of young Household Cavalry troopers in Knightsbridge. His horse had a mind of her own, and - as he had the responsibility of handing over the heavy wooden shield to the best recruit - he had a problem on hearing the music strike up when the horse moved of its own volition; the horse's movement made it a distinct challenge to get near enough to hand over the shield to the trooper!

In summing up, David Leakey reflected that in his experiences, the provision of leadership is best sought through consensus by discussion and explanation of proposed actions, so that soldiers at every level are aware of the rationale and logic of what is required of them.

*The talk gave us an explanation of his military career, with the 'highs' and 'lows' and his pride in commanding his regiment. Following questions, the chairman gave the vote of thanks.*

*Report: Alan Poulter*



## **OCTOBER VISITS**

### **'Round the Bend'...or was it down the drain?**

A number of us attended the Wessex Water 'Round the Bend' tour at Gillingham Water Treatment Centre, off Common Mead Lane in Wyke, on Saturday 7th October. This was a preliminary to the 14<sup>th</sup> November talk to be given by Matt Wheeldon of Wessex Water.

The tours are a regular feature of Wessex Water's consumer engagement and education programme, which have been running for some years. They cover a guided tour of the facility, and a member of management accompanies visitors to answer any questions.

Gillingham is currently benefiting from a £3million upgrade to the holding tanks for partly treated sewerage, as well as expanding the capacity of the site for those occasions when more input flows through the pipes than the plant is permitted to treat.



One of the 10m deep settlement tanks that form part of the £3million investment.

Aerial view of part of the extensive site covering many acres.



(Photos courtesy of Kenneth Wilson.)

There is a ‘magic number’ which – and I hope my memory serves me well - for Gillingham, I recorded as being 76 litre/second. Which gives an idea as to the scale of the operation that takes not only what we flush down the toilet but also, in many instances, roof and road run-off. The heavy rains are such that on occasion the raw input has to be pumped into large tanks and then taken away by road tanker to be treated at another site with a higher capacity.

As might be expected, water is heavily regulated, and I hope that at the Wessex Water talk on 14<sup>th</sup> November we’ll be treated to a number of insights as to how significant the regulatory environment is. One little insight I will share ahead of the talk is the narrow profit margins that exist in the water industry, which is about 5% at the net margin level (I am **not** being sponsored for this I hasten to add, it is simply a subject that I find fascinating!).

Our walk around the Gillingham site allowed consideration of the significant overall costs: compliance costs, huge capital plant investment (that is never-ending), regulatory costs (and of course at times - fines!) means that the drinking water we have truly ‘on tap’ and the convenience of being able to flush our waste away and let someone else deal with it, is a significant benefit, and one that is unlike the experiences in many less fortunate nations that I’m sure we have visited during our lives.

Water has been in the news again in recent weeks with OFWAT commenting on a number of water companies with which it has significant concerns. Wessex Water is not one of those companies, but I’m sure we all remember the headlines a few months ago when Thames Water made national news, since it appeared to have the potential to default on its financial obligations.

Of course, most of us are old enough to remember the privatization of the water industry. For my own part I was at what was then ‘Price Waterhouse’ and we were barred from buying shares. (This was for the reason that none of us could be seen to be benefitting from our advisory work!). It is no secret that some of us were not totally convinced of the merits of privatization, albeit some changes were desperately needed. It seemed obvious to most of us advisors that financial ‘engineering’ would creep in, and the companies would probably be saddled with debt that would then have to be serviced. (If ever anyone has a free afternoon it is worth having a look at many, the water companies’ accounts to see the full scale of the issue after the passage of 40 years.) Enough of this, I am sure that Matt will be well versed in these matters, and will be willing to address what I hope will be a lively session at his talk on the 14<sup>th</sup> November.

*Report: Mike Madgwick*



**ENDPIECE – Editor**

**Signs of the times**

**On a Gynaecologist's Office Door:**

*"Dr Jones; at your cervix."*

**At a Chiropodist's:**

*"Time wounds all heels."*

**At an Opticians:**

*"If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place."*

**On a Hospital maternity room door:**

*"Push. Push. Push."*

**In a Vet's waiting room:**

*"Be back in 5 minutes. Sit! Stay!"*

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**In the front yard of a Funeral Director:**

*"Drive carefully. We'll wait."*

**In a Restaurant window:**

*"Don't stand there and be hungry; come on in and get fed up."*

**At a Cobbler's premises:**

*We will heel you ...*

*We will save your sole ...*

*We will even dye for you ...*

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**On a Plumber's truck:**

*"We repair what your husband fixed."*

**On another Plumber's truck:**

*"Don't sleep with a drip. Call your plumber."*

**On an Electrician's truck:**

*"Let us remove your shorts."*

**In a Leeds plumber's yard:**

*"Best place in town to take a leak."*

**At a Tyre/Exhaust centre in Manchester:**

*"Invite us to your next blowout."*

**Outside another Tyre/Exhaust centre:**

*"No appointment necessary. We hear you coming."*

**On a Waste Disposal Truck:**

*"Yesterday's Meals on Wheels"*

**Sign on the back of another Waste Disposal Truck:**

*"Caution - This Truck is full of Political Promises."*

### **Historical Footnote - October 1884.**



The Greenwich meridian was universally accepted as the one from which all times would be measured. Universally, except for the French, that is – they refused to adopt Greenwich as the prime meridian until 1911. Even then they wouldn't call it 'Greenwich', instead using the term '*Paris mean time, retarded by 9 minutes and 21 seconds*'.