

# PROBUS





## RECORDER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET

(www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk)

Issue No. 227 December 2023

#### **CHAIRMAN'S NOTES** – Colin Chamberlain

This year has gone so fast and once again Christmas looms again just a month away.

Personally for Enid and I so much has happened during 2023 and we are now in a position we could never had imagined a year ago, and one that we certainly had not planned for - or were ready for.

Nevertheless time ticks on, and the Christmas dinner at the Grange at Oborne will soon be with us. We have 43 Members and Partners booked for the Dinner which should be a good night especially when you might remember that on 6th December the Club will be 40 years old. Remember also to book the coach if you are not driving yourself, but on the other hand don't book the coach and forget to book the meal - as several members have done!

Our thanks go to our new Social Coordinator, Mike Madgewick - for organising a visit to the Haynes Motor Museum, which together with an excellent guide and a Group discount went down very well.

And finally for the last two Fridays our morning meetings have been held in the Old Brewery Cafe as the Slade was closed. This resulted in an increase in attendance to between 10-12 members. Will we be continuing with this Venue?

#### WELFARE & SOCIAL

#### Welfare – John Owen

Happily, not too much to report on this month other than to say that Tom Brain is sadly now in Shaftesbury Hospital, having been recently transferred from Salisbury. When I last spoke to his wife Pat, it was hoped to move Tom to The Mellows in Gillingham soon.

Peter Bonson and his wife Freda are very grateful for the magazines and other reading material I took round last week. Unfortunately both were suffering from heavy colds and so I was unable to spend any time with them.

Recently there appears to have been a 'BOGOF' deal on cataract operations, with Ian McClelland, Simon Hill and soon, David Roberts, all going under the knife! Watch this space for further deals!

#### **GRANDPARENT DUTIES** – The essential keyboard!!

Press • If you are one of our children.

Press **②** If you need us to stay with the grandchildren.

Press **3** If you want to borrow the car.

Press **4** If you need your clothes washing and ironing.

Press <b>6</b>	If you want the grandchildren to sleep here.
Press <b>6</b>	If you want us to pick the children up from school.
Press 🗸	If you want to come for lunch.
Press <b>8</b>	If you need money.
Press <b>9</b>	If you are splitting up with your wife/husband/partner.

If you're inviting us for dinner or offering to take us to the theatre, start talking - we're listening!!!

#### **Social - December Club Events - Editor**

12 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	The Malta Convoys  David Parsons
13 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	Chairman's Christmas Dinner The Grange at Oborne (19.00 for 19.30pm)

#### **Travel Tip** - Pete Grange

Something we discovered on a recent trip to the Cotswolds.

**Prescription Medicines**. If you're away from home and you realise you have left some of your repeat prescription medicine at home, all is not lost.

- Find a local pharmacy and get their **NHS code** from them.
- Then phone **111** and explain the problem. The nice people at 111 will email the pharmacy and authorise a sufficient quantity of your medication to last until you get home.



#### REPORTS ON OUR OCTOBER & NOVEMBER TALKS

#### Donald Campbell - 'Across the Lake'

Phil Holt - 31st October 2023

Phil Holt is a former Air Traffic Controller. Last February, he told us about the Red Arrows Royal Aerobatic Team. This latest talk was about the life of Donald Campbell CBE, and his single-minded efforts to achieve land and water speed records with his cars and boats named Bluebird. Phil has been involved with the restoration of Bluebird following its recovery from Coniston Water.

Donald Campbell was the son of Sir Malcolm Campbell, who set world speed records on land and water in the 1920's and 1930's. Sir Malcolm's land speed record was set on Salt Flats, Utah, in 1935 with a speed just exceeding 300mph. In 1939, on Coniston Water, he achieved a water speed record of 141.74 mph. Each of Campbell's cars and hydroplanes were named Bluebird, and his son Donald continued this when he named his own vehicles.



One of two children, Donald Malcolm Campbell was born into



a wealthy family. He was always superstitious, disliking the colour green and the number 13. His teddy bear mascot '*Mr Whoppit*' was with him when he died in his final attempt on Coniston Water in 1967. From a very early age, Donald was imbued with the thirst for speed - and ever greater speeds; he was present at some of his father's speed attempts and publicity events. He had a relatively strict upbringing and was soon bundled off to Prep School. At the outbreak of the World War II,

Donald volunteered for the RAF; unfortunately, due to having rheumatic fever as a child, he was deemed medically unfit. Instead, he became a maintenance engineer with Briggs Motor Bodies in Thurrock, later becoming a shareholder in a company producing machine tools.

In 1948, Campbell's father died, and Donald – together with his father Malcolm's chief mechanic Leo Villa – strove to set new records on land and water. He had married first in 1945 (his daughter Gina survives him). Unfortunately this marriage did not last, and he was married twice more. His widow, Tonia, also survives him.

Initially using his father's boat, Bluebird (K4), record attempts were initially unsuccessful. Following news that the record had been broken by an American who reached 160mph, Donald was



determined to reclaim the record for Britain. At the same time there was another British contender, John Cobb, who drove a turbo-jet hydroplane, Crusader. This had a



target speed of 200mph, but Cobb was killed during a record attempt.

Donald resolved to build a new Bluebird; and a jet-powered Bluebird (K7) was designed by Ken and Lew Norris, while sponsorship for the attempt was obtained. Donald Campbell set several water speed records up to December 1964, the first of these achieving just over 200mph on Ullswater.



Following modifications to the boat, further records followed, including on Lake Mead in Nevada.

Campbell, who had a love/hate relationship with the press, used them to gain publicity and to generate public interest. Speeds edged up towards the 300mph target. At the same time, the land speed record was also in his sights, and the Norris brothers designed Bluebird-Proteus CN7, with a target of 500mph. For trials, the salt flats in Utah were used, but the car crashed. After a rebuild, the vehicle was shipped to Australia, and a new record of 403mph was set in July 1964. With a new water speed record gained at Lake Dumbleyung, Campbell achieved his ambition to set records on water and land in one year.

Campbell had a vision for a rocket car to break the sound barrier. He decided to try once more for a water speed record, to generate publicity and interest. Bluebird K7 was fitted with a Bristol Orpheus engine from a Folland Gnat aircraft and taken to Coniston. In January 1967, following several measured runs, the boat flipped and sank; Donald was killed. Phil Holt played the dramatic film excerpt recording the tragic final run in the BBC film 'Across the Lake'. The wreckage of K7, and subsequently Campbell's body, were recovered in 2000/2001. The Bluebird project started 25,000 hours of work on the restoration, and a replacement engine was procured.

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

\*\*\*\*\*

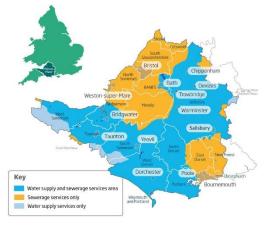
#### **Wessex Water**

### Julian Okoye MBA CEng MIET. – 14 November 2023



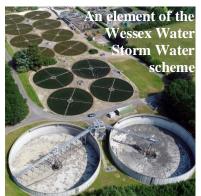
This talk was a natural follow-on to the recent visit to the Gillingham water treatment works. Julian Okoye is the Strategy and Commercial Manager of Wessex Water and has over 25 years' experience of working in the water industry.

Julian began by explaining the challenges facing Wessex Water. The nation-wide system of sewers and pipes – many laid in the Victorian era – are gradually being replaced. Most of these have to cope with the combined outflow of both rain water and foul water. With the increase in rainfall associated with our changing climatic conditions, plus increased run-off from built-up areas, together with an increasing population, was resulting in considerable additional outflow, which means – as happened before but to a lesser extent – that storage capacity at peak times is insufficient at the treatment works, and discharge into rivers and the sea is inevitable.



To address these underlying problems, there is now more investment into storm outflows (which are also now monitored electronically), and storage capacity at treatment works is being increased, with larger storage tanks being installed. The problems caused by surges in rainwater

outflow can be partially offset by the use of soakaways, although in some areas (such as Gillingham) the water table is very high, which exacerbates the problems. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now being used to monitor the underground network of sewers and pipes to identify the incidence of blockages and to predict surges in outflow; the scale is quite daunting since Wessex Water has over 35,000 km of sewers to look after!



With regard to storm and sewage overflows, which are really a legacy from the past, Wessex Water's long-term investment programme aims to reduce or eliminate the need for them. The other difficulty affecting river water quality, ecology status and health, is the run-off from agricultural land of nitrates, phosphates and other chemicals. In fact, nationally, storm overflows account for only about 4% of the reasons for not achieving good ecological status. In order to slow the flow of ground water overflows, Wessex Water is making use in some areas of nature-based solutions (e.g. reed beds).

Mr Okoye also attempted to dispel the myth about the current state of the water industry, which has stemmed largely from increased media interest. While much reporting has been negative, he reported that in reality water quality is improving; bathing water quality is now better than in 1996 – but he accepted that much more needs to be done. In seeking to improve matters further, Wessex Water has submitted its five-year business plan towards that end to the industry regulator.

The talk generated a lively questions session, at the end of which the chairman gave the vote of thanks.

Report: Alan Jeffs

#### Oil – What is its Future?

The report on this talk will appear in next month's Recorder – Ed.



#### **Haynes Motor Museum**

#### Wednesday 15th November

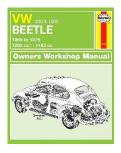


Wow! - we were certainly lucky with the weather for the journey to and from Sparkford, bright sunshine between the predicted storms.

A group of 7 members with 2 of our lady partners¹ spent more time than we had realized having a guided tour from Les, one of the Museum's volunteers, looking around the very extensive facility. From entry to exit, I will be bold and say this is an exceptionally well laid out and thought-through visitor experience.

Abbi, a member of the Museum management with whom I had been liaising gave us the group concession rate of £15/admission, even though we didn't meet the numbers threshold. Some suggested it might also have been as a result of Roger Ellis's charm and negotiating skills! Jesting apart and worth bearing in mind, by 'Gift Aiding' the entry fee² for which one has to provide contact details, the one-off admission extends to an annual entry, free of further charge.





Back to the museum and tour. The John Haynes story in itself is fascinating, and he is another product of that post-WWII enterprise cohort. He started hand writing his 'Haynes Guides' then progressed to Gestetner copier (remember these?) running off manuals all while he still held a commission as an Engineering Officer in the RAF. Latterly he realized that there was a business to be grown and - as they say, the rest is history, that I'll let the museum speak to when other members hopefully visit.



We had a few motoring career highlights for a certain member – here he can be seen collecting the keys for his newly 'down-sized' car - having found his Fiat 500 a little on the large size.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A few of us went with spare seats. I will be raising this at our next meetings, as all who went with part-empty vehicles made the point that they'd be more than happy to take a member who may not wish to drive themselves.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For this, one has to provide your contact/personal details, and then use a QR code that will be sent via e-mail. (As I write I have not yet found mine, but it probably lurks somewhere in depths of my inbox!)

We certainly experienced a trip down memory lane; I think I'm correct in stating that we all found a version of our first car somewhere in the extensive collection. There were the makes of car that, as senior members of society, we all remember when prompted, and yet I wonder how many younger drivers would recognize the names unless they are car buffs; Sunbeam, Riley, Vanden Plas, Singer ... I'm sure readers can fill in the many other such names. So much came from British engineering innovation in the past, along with all those specialist names – remember



Gordon Keeble and the tortoise badge? These were made in Eastleigh with a Chevrolet engine. If you had found yourself with some spare cash earlier in the year, <u>Bonhams</u> sold one for £85,000 last May - the stuff of dreams!



And yet - if one has even more flighty dreams, the yellow **1972 Porsche 2.4T** in the museum is valued at a modest £860,000, based on a recent US auction house sale. Many museum exhibits also showed their original prices – imagine buying a new family 4-seater for £800 these days! I was certainly taken aback in the Mini room, as there was a not-so-different version to the one that I sold as an impoverished young army officer in order to fund my future wife's engagement ring. I have to be careful here, as I might tread on thin ice – let me just say that the ring bought me a far better appreciating asset.

The Museum also has a Red car hall, well worth a long look around. John Haynes liked red cars and gosh, did he buy a few of brands and models in that colour – sufficient to make any enthusiast's mouth drool.

Then there is the American car hall and following that - even more; the Formula 1 exhibition. Some of the data sheets in this exhibition were a real eye opener; many will probably know such facts and figures, but I'll share one set of them for those who are not familiar with such data - one of the cars had a 1,600cc V6 engine developing over 900bhp, in a body configuration - including the driver's weight - of just 650kgs. Oh, and that also included the weight of fuel when on the track!

As you can tell, I certainly enjoyed the trip - as I know others did, and I hope to be back again on my free re-admission ticket.

And then ... a few more photos from the visit ...









And ... how could one not finish with a Fiat 600 .... surely not? ... a 600 (?) actually displacing 767cc!

Report: Mike Madawick

#### **ENDPIECE** – Editor

#### **CHRISTMAS LUNCH**

### THE ROYAL CHASE HOTEL, SHAFTESBURY TUESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023



Courtesy of John Owen – who was unable to make it to the front of his own lens!

#### **LOVE POTIONS**

Albert aged eighty-five and his eighty-year-old fiancée Josephine are over the moon about their decision to get married. One afternoon, they are taking a walk in order to discuss their impending nuptials when they pass a chemist and Albert suggests that they go in. Entering the shop, he approaches the gentleman behind the counter and asks whether he is the owner. The pharmacist nods politely.

'Do you sell heart medication?' asks Albert cheerfully.

'Of course we do, sir,' replies the pharmacist and he reaches behind the counter and produces the requested item.

'How about medicine for high blood pressure?'

The pharmacist again nods and produces another package from behind the counter.

'Medicine for arthritis?'

'Yes, sir.'

'What about sleeping pills?'

'Yes, of course.'

'Vitamins?'

'Yes, a number of different types.'

'Oh, and do you stock Viagra?'

'Certainly'

'That's great! We'd like to register here for our wedding gifts.'



