



PROBUS RECORDER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET
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Chairman's Notes

There comes a time in life when you just have to take stock - think of how to deal with the future. While this isn't something we have never done before, time and tide pushes us to think that we have to make the best and most of life.

As many of you know, my wife has had M.S. for over 27 years. She has coped brilliantly with this, and with limited support from me. We try to get the best out of life and family play a big part in this. Just over a year ago Ann suffered a severe episode of back pain which was dealt with by an injection into the spine. This settled us down for the next 9 months or so - until last week when a pain around her neck and scalp was diagnosed as a condition which could have rendered her blind virtually overnight, and with the added concern of damaging her bone density. Fortunately, a consultant from Salisbury hospital phoned through having seen the result of the blood test Ann had had and insisted that we went down to the surgery to pick up a prescription and to take the tablets **IMMEDIATELY**, such was the urgency of the situation.

The point I'm trying to make is that life is precious, fragile and precarious and that in our senior years, we must pay close attention to our health needs, robustly manage them and play as large a part in staying active as we can. We all know it, but can we genuinely say that, given our individual limitations, that we do the best we can? For my part, I am hoping to lose a stone in weight over the term of my chairmanship. ***What about you?***

John

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare

- **Ron and Linda Walker.** It turns out that Linda does not have blood pressure problems; rather she has a rare problem which causes raised pressure in her arm. It appears that this diagnosis was undertaken by NHS Birmingham, and Linda has been told by them that they will look for someone who can deal with this locally.
- **Robin and Jill Lloyd Williams.** When Jill was approached in mid-September, she reported that Robin had yet again had a bad night, and as a result his whole sleep pattern was adrift.

Social - October Club Events

14th October 2025	HM Yacht Britannia/National Flagship <i>Dr Stephen Payne OBE</i> In 2021 Payne revealed the design of a new flagship to replace the royal yacht HMY Britannia, which was decommissioned in 1997. When not in use by the royal family it would host diplomatic events and promote British trade. In November 2022 the UK government officially terminated the project.
22nd October 2025	<u>VISIT</u> The Royal Signals Museum, Blandford
28th October 2025	Sailor, Pilot. Corridors of Power and Clubman <i>Anthony Holt</i> His talk will cover anecdotes from his career & life. He is an author (fiction & non-fiction) and public speaker. He is influenced mainly by his primary career in the RN, following which he became Chief Executive of two well-known London clubs.
	Members' Lunch <i>The Stags Head Inn at Yarlinton</i> 12.30 for 1pm



SEPTEMBER TALKS

2nd September

Neil Meldrum

The Enigmatic Ancient Maya



Our first talk in September was given by Neil Meldrum, a lawyer from Poole, and his talk took us from the Mayas early development to the heights of their cultural development in about 700-800 AD.

He set out by showing the probable lines of human development that took place and how the Mayans probably came to be centred on an area of Central America that included the whole of the Yucatan peninsula.



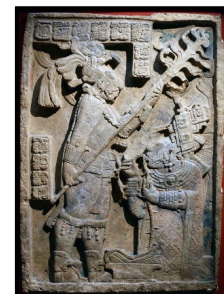
The Maya were jungle based and, although savage and bloodthirsty, were in the main agricultural. He explained that maize development was foundational to the rise of Mayan civilization, transforming



it from broad-spectrum farming to a specialized, maize-based agricultural system. Maize became sacred and was culturally revered, featuring prominently in Maya creation myths, religion, art, and calendrical systems, and served as the dietary staple that fed the population, generated surplus for elites, and sustained their sophisticated society for centuries.

The culture was known for its sophisticated writing system, mathematics, and astronomy, the Maya built large city-states - never an 'empire' - with pyramid temples and developed accurate calendar systems and elaborate art. Though the civilization's ancient cities declined by 900 AD, Mayan culture and language persist today, with over seven million of Mayan background living in the region today.

During his talk, Neil showed images of many of the cities, with their pyramids, temples, and hieroglyphic writings.



16th September

James Porter

The Falklands War



Having spoken to us last March on the subject of *Custer's Last Stand*, James re-introduced himself. He is a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, originally from Guernsey in the Channel Islands, now living in Sturminster Newton, who served for 41 years before retiring in 2011.

His talk covered the background and history leading up to the Falklands War of 1982. It covered the Argentinian invasion and the fighting in Port Stanley, and events in South Georgia.

He then covered the British reaction to these events, including the decision to send a Task Force and the incredible logistical challenge of assembling and loading the 72 merchant ships involved with 38,000 tons of stores. He went on to look at the Task Force itself; the roles and capabilities of the warships involved.

After the initial battles at sea with Argentine air attacks and the sinking of the cruiser Belgrano and the destroyer HMS Sheffield, he examined the landings at San Carlos, the air raids on the ships there and the exhausting advance ('yomp') across East Falkland by Royal Marine and Army units.

He described the Battle of Goose Green in some detail (not least because after the war he was stationed there for 7 months in 1983) and he went on to cover the final battles in the mountains around Stanley, following which the Argentine forces surrendered.



'Yomping'



Post battle at Goose Green



HMS Hermes – RN Flagship



Argentine surrender

30th September

Chris Walker

‘HE DID IT HIS WAY’



For over 30 years Chris produced and presented a weekly radio jazz programme. This ran for 27 years on BBC Radio Solent and subsequently on a selection of community radio stations across the world. He recently produced and presented a complete jazz diary for the Solent area.

His talk covered the musical career of **Frank Sinatra** – one of the greatest singers of the 20th Century. From his early days as a singer with big bands to his topping the bill both in Las Vegas and in Hollywood movies. We were treated to rare footage, photographs and original recordings from Chris’s own collection, and the result a thoroughly enjoyable romp through days of old in his musical tribute to Frank.



Visit Report

The Nao Santa Maria Weymouth

On the **31st of July 2025** six Club members and a guest ventured to Weymouth to tour the Nao Santa Maria. This is a full-size replica of the ship sailed to America by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and is one of several replica ships built by a Spanish company that tour the world and demonstrate what



life was like for sailors in the 15th and 16th Centuries. The replica was constructed in Punta Umbría (Spain), with exquisite craftsmanship by master shipwrights using iroko and pine wood. It is a full-scale reproduction — 200 tons, 29 meters long, and 8 meters wide, with four masts, five sails, and five decks.

The vessel is very compact and would have accommodated 40 or so sailors who would have slept on the open decks. The below-deck areas were reserved for cargo and only the captain would have had a proper cabin.



The exhibit was extremely busy and provided an interesting insight into life on a voyage of discovery. From our own perspective, it proved interesting moving between the decks, which required some careful climbing and descending of ladders. However, the weather was kind to us, and the tour was followed by an enjoyable leisurely lunch at a restaurant on the esplanade.

Peter Hurst



ENDPIECE (Editor)

A Short Story – “Flash Fiction”

“Now and Then”

By Matt Oliver

I’ve never told anyone this before.

I’m not sure why I’m telling you now, to be honest. I suppose I feel I’ve got nothing to lose anymore. What with – you know – the diagnosis.

It happened exactly forty years ago.

I was walking along the corridor to my form room, to teach my next class. The school was a Victorian building; three stories high, built in a square surrounding a quad. Stone stairways in each corner of the building, the steps worn down in the middle by a century of footfall. Drab, grey corridors, lined with old-fashioned radiators wide enough to sit on. It had been a Grammar School when I attended as a pupil. You had to pass your 11-Plus to gain entry. But now, by the time I was teaching there, it was just an average comprehensive.

I could see two boys at the end of the corridor – the older boy clearly menacing a first-year.

“*What’s going on?*” I shouted. The aggressor loosened his grip and the first-year took his opportunity to escape. The older boy turned, and I saw his posture transform into an aggressive, provocative pose which I recognised immediately.

Jimmy Williams.

“*More trouble with you, Williams?*” I said approaching him.

The fifth-year stood his ground, lifting his chin in defiance and staring his cold eyes into mine. “*What’s it got to do with you, sir?*” he snorted.

I don’t mind saying it: Williams was a vile child. The family were renowned – his father had done time for GBH, and this apple certainly hadn’t fallen far from the tree. He’d broken another pupil’s arm last year in an unprovoked attack, and there was even rumour of some kind of sexual harassment towards a fourth-year girl. He was a thug and a bully and proud of it. A real Oggy Moxon.

“*You should be in class,*” I said, standing my ground.

“*What you gonna do about it?*” He looked around pointedly, menacingly. “*No headmaster with his cane here to back you up this time, is there?*”

“*Move, Williams. Now.*”

His face was intimidatingly close, as he murmured, “*Make me.*” The tip of his nose actually touched mine.

That's when I snapped.

With one huge, instinctive reaction, I shoved him hard. It obviously took him by surprise; I witnessed a momentary expression of confusion and disbelief in his face, as he flailed backwards and tumbled like a ragdoll down the stone stairs.

The crack of his skull echoed round the stairwell as it bounced off the floor, before a lake of deep red blood seeped out from under him.

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No-one really asked questions in those days. Well, we weren't questioned, were we? Teachers.

I said I'd found him like that, on my way to class. Didn't know how long he'd been there. Terrible accident.

Now, there'd be all sorts of procedure and form-filling and questions to deal with. Not then, though. Then, I got away with it.

Did the world a favour too, if you ask me.

## **“We met and we married ....”**

**By Josie Wafer  
Liverpool  
2007**

We met and we married a long time ago  
We worked for long hours when wages were low  
No TV, no wireless, no bath, times were hard  
Just a cold water tap and a walk in the yard  
No holidays abroad, no carpets on floors  
We had coal on fires and we didn't lock doors  
Our children arrived, no Pill in those days  
And we brought them up without any state aid  
They were safe going out to play in the park  
And old folk could go for a walk in the dark  
No Valium, no drugs and no LSD  
We cured most of our ills with a good cup of tea  
No vandals, no muggings, there was nothing to rob  
We felt we were rich with a couple of bob  
People were happier in those far off days  
Kinder and caring in so many ways  
Now I am alone I look back through the years  
I don't think of the bad times, the trouble and tears  
I remember the blessings, our home and our love  
That we shared them together I thank God above.