



PROBUS



RECORDER



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

Issue No. 251
December 2025

Chairman's Notes

My first task this month is to thank Peter Hurst's wife for including our advert in the latest newsletter for U3A. I know that there are a few Probus members already involved with the U3A, but new members would always be welcome.

As the year comes to an end, I am pleased to say that we have had more talks given by our members than I can remember in the 12 years that I have been a member. Les Yeates has surpassed himself by giving not one, but two talks this year, both nostalgic memories from the 1960's and both well received. I also note that our first meeting of next year has another member talk given by Nick Griffin, followed by new member Martin Sharp, and two months later, by Andy Newton, surely a record for the club. Our speaker secretary has certainly been working his magic.

The Christmas lunch was another success for Colin Chamberlain, and the Montague Arms did us proud. This was the second time we had gathered together on a Wednesday, giving us an increased opportunity to chat and socialise. Meals are definitely being better supported of late which I believe is a good sign of the health of the club.

The Christmas Dinner at The Royal Chase in Shaftesbury is a repeat of last year which I was told was very good, and my recent dealings with the hotel suggest that all will be well again this year. We have had to cancel the coach as numbers sadly do not merit spending that much money on such small numbers - a sign of the times?! I have purchased some excellent raffle prizes, and so attendees - please bring cash, as we hope to make a meaningful contribution to a charity of our choice.



Finally, Ann and I do not get out that much these days, but we had the 'pleasure' of witnessing the Canal Christmas Fair at Bradford-on-Avon this weekend. I am happy to inform you that Hippie-land is well and truly alive, proving that it is not only Glastonbury and Frome where it is 'cool man'. I am sure that Les Yeats would appreciate a chat with a few of them!!!

John





WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare

In general, there has been no change to the previously reported welfare matters, for which we are all thoroughly thankful! We hope that no one succumbs to problems over the coming months.

- **Ron and Linda Walker.** Linda continues to suffer raised pressure in her arm for which she is still waiting for a specialist's appointment. She and Ron continue to make the best that they can of their lives.
- **Robin and Jill Lloyd Williams.** Dave Hooker told us last month that while Robin has to have a major heart operation, no date for this has yet been proposed. This remains the state of affairs at the time of publication, and we offer Robin and Jill our very best wishes while this state continues.

Social – December Club Events

9th December 2025	<p style="text-align: center;">Mount Kilimanjaro <i>Ian Williamson</i></p> <p>Before retiring at the end of May 2014 Ian was in Retailing at Head Office Level.</p> <p>Since retiring, he undertakes voluntary work for the National Trust, St Margaret's Hospice and the Swan Theatre in Yeovil. He also walks regularly with the South Somerset Rambler's.</p>
11th December 2025 (Wives/Partners)	<p style="text-align: center;">Christmas Dinner</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Royal Chase Hotel</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Christy's Lane, Shaftesbury, SP7 8DB</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7:0pm for 7.30pm</p>



Reports on NOVEMBER TALKS

14th October

Kevin Patience

Two sets of Medals A Unique Award for a Unique Man?



Kevin Patince grew up in Kenya and served in the Royal Air Force. On leaving the service he completed a commercial diving course and was involved in salvage operations on the Kenya coast. In 1976 he published his first book on East African railway history and in 1977 became a commercial diver in the Arabian Gulf based in Bahrain and later established a marine salvage company. In the 1990s he published a number of books on the military, and on the transport history of East Africa, later writing articles for a number of aviation, medal and railway journals. Now resident in the UK, his writing and research continues, together with presenting talks on a variety of subjects.

The gentleman in question was Jeffrey Lincoln-Gordon. He was born in India in the latter years of the nineteenth century. He joined the Indian Postal Service and in 1914 was responsible for delivering mail to the Indian troops serving on the Western Front. The volume of mail was truly astounding, being transported by both rail and ships. Even more astounding was the Service's ability to get the mail to the troops in extremely short time, the purpose of which illustrated the importance of keeping up the morale of the Indian troops in such unique circumstances as the Western Front. Many of the ships being used to transport the mail were sunk by German U-Boats.

After serving in Mesopotamia, Lincoln-Gordon rejoined the Indian Postal Service, with postings around northern India and later, Singapore. An outstanding feature of the postal service was the wonderful buildings they occupied. Large and beautifully designed, almost palatial.

While serving in Singapore, WWII broke out and Lincoln-Gordon was captured by the Japanese. Camp conditions were dreadful, although he quickly designed a latrine system which helped. The Japanese were using supply boats to service their troops attacking India but changed their plans when they began losing their boats to allied submarines. At this point the Japanese decided to build the infamous Death Railway. Military men were transported from Singapore, as well as indigenous locals, to build the railway, with devastating results for so many. Lincoln- Gordon survived three years in Japanese captivity, although the effects, both physical and mental, left their mark.



Following WWII, he moved to Kenya where he farmed and was brought in to work with the Kenyan Police Service during the Mau Mau uprising. When he died, he had amassed fourteen medals from the Indian, British and Kenyan governments for his services and achievements, including two sets of the same medals from his service during WWI, quite possibly a unique group.



25th November

Les Yates

1960s Television

Our Probus Cub member Les Yates provided a fascinating talk that took the majority of those present back on a wonderful wave of nostalgia to the 1960s. Quite what a retired estate agent was up to when he was working can only be guessed at! However, Les had very obviously gone to huge trouble to bring us a captivating and informative talk.



He began by reminding us of the hours covered by TV in those far ago days, and the fact that there were only two sources as opposed to the myriad available today.



The talk was structured so as to cover the various genres of TV provided throughout the 1960s – such areas as Action & Adventure / Soap operas / Sport / Children's TV / Game Shows / Documentaries / Dramas / etc-etc. In so doing, Les treated us to examples of each and reminded us of the major programmes in each that had been watched, and of the size of the audience. For instance, in explaining Football coverage, he explained the viewing habits of the nation through the lens of Match of the Day. And the fact that the first ever programme on the Royal Family aired in 1969 had an estimated **30.6 million viewers in the UK** and a global audience of **350 million**. This meant that about 70% of the UK population had watched the programme. There were numerous other vignettes that he provided, such as the fact that the Rolling Stones had appeared on Sunday night at the London Palladium in January 1967, when they caused controversy for their refusal to participate in the show's traditional finale.

He told us that his personal favourite viewing from this era covered the numerous Westerns that appeared, and concluded by taking questions from the floor, of which there were many – including not only questions but also reminiscences by other members from their own recollections.

Thank you, Les! – and we look forward to further fruits from your memories and your research in due course.



THE LAST CONTEMPTIBLE



*Harry Patch, born 17th June 1898, was Britain's oldest man and the last surviving British soldier of The Great War. He died on 26th July 2009 aged one hundred and eleven.
(Born and buried in Monkton Combe, Bath.)*



By Paul Hooley

*“Exterminate the treacherous
English, walk over General
French’s contemptible little
army.”*

*Kaiser Wilhelm II
- September 1914*

This old soldier’s fading fast
Reflecting on a glorious past
Proud Contemptible to the last
I bow my head and pray

Remembering still the Kaiser’s sneers
That helped me conquer all my fears
And resolved in me for ninety years
To fight another day

Flanders Fields, so many dead
Remain fresh memories in my head
Now all the boys have gone ahead
And my future’s looming large

Final journey, furthest land
Last manoeuvre close at hand
Not by choice you understand
Do I make this final charge

No bugle boy this fateful morn
The sound I hear is Gabriel’s horn
Heralding a different dawn
And calling me to rest

One more effort, one more hill
Spurred on yet by Kaiser Bill
His evil words inspire me still
To face my greatest test

Little left but skin and bone
Flag in hand I stand alone
With no one else to take it home
It falls with me today

The time has come to join the rest
So dress me in my Sunday best
Pin my medals on my chest
And let me fade away.





ENDPIECE
(Editor)



A Visit from St. Nicholas

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads.
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below.
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tinny reindeer.

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name!

"Now Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! on, on Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky.
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of Toys, and St Nicholas too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.
A bundle of Toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler, just opening his pack.

His eyes - how they twinkled! his dimples - how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!



His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly!

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself!
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose!

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, 'ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"



Next Probus meeting

Tuesday, 6th January 2026

