



PROBUS



RECORDER

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

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Chairman's Notes

It may be late to wish everyone a happy new year, but here goes anyway!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Right, that's got that out of the way, time to blow away all the cobwebs and look forward with renewed vigour to the next exciting instalment of Probus life. Actually, it is more like washing away the cobwebs at present!

This month we have had two very different talks given by members, both well received and yet again, displaying the wide variety of interests and experiences we have within the membership. If only we could let more people know! Attendance is steady at around 25 per meeting but the obvious issue as we move forward is the ever-growing need for increasing the membership. The talks are generally very good, the ambience is excellent, Colin's meal arrangements are vastly improved and we at last have some comfy chairs on which to rest our weary limbs! By the way, it would be helpful if members are unable to attend, that they indicate this by using our website and pressing 'that' button. Our secretary is a stickler for record keeping and is easily upset, especially since he had his garage demolished on New Year's Eve by some aging delinquent! Talking of which, I believe it is now completely demolished, and it will shortly be rebuilt by a specialist team employed by the insurance company, whose sole role is to travel the country rectifying such 'accidents'. Amazing!

I may have mentioned previously that I have embarked on mission to improve my general wellbeing by enrolling in the gym at Riversmeet. This was stimulated by a visit to my doctor who suggested the DOCTOR'S REFERALL SCHEME which allows you three months discounted membership at the sports centre. My three months being up, I have extended this now for the full year. I have to say that there is a huge variety of ages and body types attending the gym and it is in no way daunting, given that we are all just working to the best of our ability. I can't recommend it more highly, and I certainly do feel the benefit after so many years of inactivity. I sleep better, have less aches and pains and am generally able to do more before needing another nap!!!

John

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare

- **Geoffrey Hall.** Geoffrey has been having a few problems recently, but they appear to have eased somewhat. While he is now walking a little, he feels extremely tired a great deal of the time - but remains upbeat in his outlook.
- **Carol Madgwick.** It is understood that Carol has not been at all well recently and on your behalf, we ask Mike to pass on to her the good wishes of our membership for a speedy and successful recovery.
- **Linda Walker.** Linda continues to wait for a specialist's appointment.
- **Robin Lloyd Williams.** Robin hopes to be back on his feet in the next fortnight and has hopes of subsequently being able to greet the Chairman in person before the latter hands over!

Social – February Club Events

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| <p>3rd February 2026</p> | <p>The Chequered History of Northern Cyprus <i>Alastair Olver</i></p> |
| <p>17th February 2026 (Wives/Partners)</p> | <p>The Third Cod War - A Sailor's Perspective <i>Andy Newton</i> <small>Andy Newton served in the Royal Navy and saw active duty off the coast of Iceland during the conflicts in the 1970s.</small></p> |
| <p>17th February 2026 (Wives/Partners)</p> | <p>Lunch: The Plough Inn at Manston 12:30 for 13:00.</p> |



Reports on ‘Cusp of Year’ TALKS

9th December 2025

Ian Williamson

Kilimanjaro



Since retiring about 10 years ago, Ian Williamson has done Voluntary Work around Yeovil for St Margaret's Hospice, the Orchard Vale Trust and Weldmar. In support of these organisations his visit to us in December was to talk about his experience climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Kenya in 2022.

Ian was part of a relatively small group from the UK who did the trek. They did so under the guidance of a Kenya-based firm of ‘sustainable’ tour operators. The experience was successfully completed, with only one or two of the group falling by the wayside as a result of “mountain sickness”, which it was explained is not as frightening as its name suggests. He showed numerous slides of members of the group on the walk, and also mentioned the incredible work of the African porters who lugged the complete tented camp, so that having packed up the whole kit-and-kaboodle, then carried it up the route to overtake the expedition members on their climb, and have the camp re-set up before the trekkers arrived for the next night. He was one of the successful climbers and returned to tell his tale – for the benefit of his Charities.

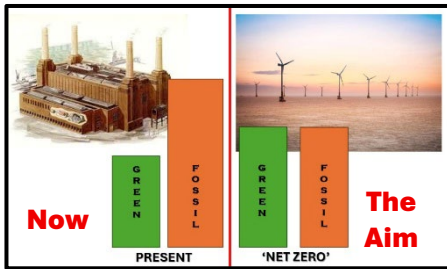


6th January 2026

Nicholas Griffin

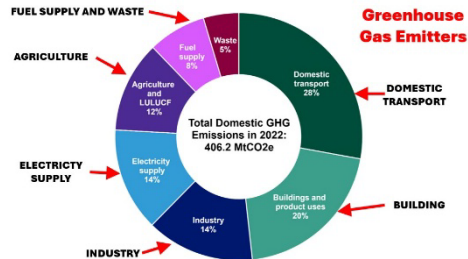
Power – Net Zero

Nic Griffin had very kindly accepted a request to speak to us early in 2026 on the subject of Net Zero – what it meant, and how it was likely to affect us in the UK. Despite the ennui of the post-New Year, he provided a fascinating background to our current energy situation and offered some thoughts as to the reality of the future.



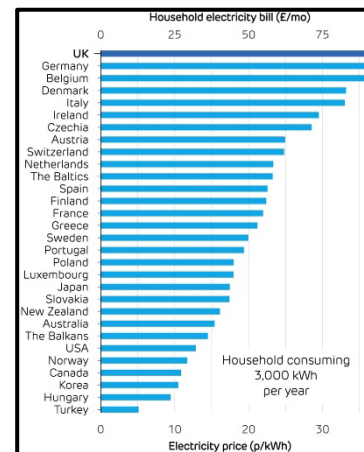
He began by outlining the aim of current political initiatives towards Net Zero. This was followed by explanations as to the Greenhouse Effect, its causes and its make-up, and then on the effects of combating those causes.

The current emission producers of Greenhouse Gases were shown before Nic went into detailed examples of each, with commentaries on the propensities and problems associated with each. Amongst these he highlighted the planning procedure issues and experiences associated with them. Whilst there had been and continued to be problems, there had been successes too, amongst



which was the [Dinorwig Power Station](#), located inside a mountain in Snowdonia, Wales, where it provides a rapid-response "battery" for the National Grid. It has operated since 1984, it can reach full capacity (1,724 MW) in less than 16 seconds to meet sudden demand surges, often called "TV pick-ups".

One of the more sobering facts that Nic brought out was the cost to the UK of current prices – our household electricity bills – where we top the world league!



As to how we reach such a position, he highlighted the fact that as our prices have rocketed, so have the number of households unable to pay their bills.

As to why this has happened, he also showed a chart of the rise of price in unleaded fuel, and pointed out that whilst this continues, as a nation we are also having to pay out large sums to wind farms NOT to produce electricity, in order not to overload the network when the electricity cannot be stored!

On the other side of the Net Zero coin, he also pointed out that whilst there is political drive towards Net Zero, and the UK is foisted with the highest energy costs in the world that burden Industry and Commerce as well as Domestic supplies, there remain huge untapped sources of energy on our doorstep – the North Sea Oil Fields!

He finished by leaving his audience with the thought that while Net Zero might be a 'worthy' aim, the consequences to the UK – and particularly to our successors – would probably benefit from a great deal more careful analysis and consideration.

20th January 2026

Martin Sharp

Rallying to Monte Carlo in a Classic Bentley



Probus member Martin Sharp, gave us a fascinating and enjoyable talk with lots of accompanying graphics relating to a 1993 venture into Monte Carlo. Martin Sharp and David Ratcliffe entered their 1953 Bentley Mk VI Special in the 1993 Classic Rally to Monte Carlo

At the time, they were both serving on a Chinook Helicopter squadron based at RAF Gütersloh in Germany, Martin as a Squadron Leader (Navigator), and David as a Flight Lieutenant (Pilot).

The Monte, as it was called, was a very challenging classic rally designed to recreate the Monte Carlo Rally of the 1950s and 60s in an era before turbo-charged engines and computers. It involved driving over 3,000 miles against the clock along some of Europe's most challenging roads in the depths of winter, and in cars of a type that could have entered the rally before 1967.

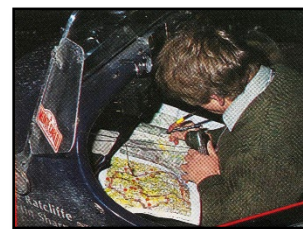
Many of the entrants were highly experienced rally crews from the 50's and 60's, but Martin and David were total novices at this kind of event, and driving their open 2-seater Bentley in the freezing conditions added another dimension to the challenge. As was the case in the original Monte, cars started from starting points all over Europe and were required to follow pre-designated routes on a timed schedule to converge on a concentration point in the middle of France.



Day 1. Martin and David started in Prague in what had been until recently communist Czechoslovakia behind the Iron Curtain. After driving through freezing fog in the Sudetenland and through for the cobbled streets of Dresden and Colditz in former East Germany, they reached their first overnight halt in Limburg.

After a pre-dawn start, the next day (**Day 2**) took them over the Vosges Mountains and into the Burgundy wine region via several timed halts, to converge with the other 150 crews for a night-stop in Beaune.

Day 3. This presented more challenging navigation and 'regularity' sections timed to the second, driving into the night through twisty narrow roads of the Massif Central, finally reaching the night stop at Vals-Les-Bains in the heart of the Ardèche.

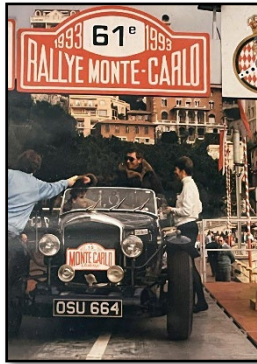




Day 4 took them across the Rhone Valley to climb steeply into the foothills of the Alps, and a long drive through the night via tightly-timed sections to reach Valberg by



daybreak, and then onwards to Monte Carlo.



In brilliant sunshine, they descended towards Monte Carlo, and with their first glimpse of the Mediterranean in the windscreen, Martin and David were in the top 50 as they pulled onto the ramp by the harbour, thus earning their place in the final run-off night loop among the top drivers and navigators, many of whom, unlike Martin and David, had years of experience of these kinds of events.

They started the night section well, keeping on the pace while charging up the mountains of the Alps



Maritime, but a navigational error on the Col du Turini saw them lose time and they dropped out of contention for the top places. Nevertheless, they finished inside the top 50, gaining an award at the sparkling gala dinner in the Cafe Royal for the '*best-placed all-drum-brake car*'.



Getting the car 'home' was the next challenge, and it was surely just a coincidence (!) that one of our own Squadron's Chinooks was returning from Nice to Germany after a training exercise that weekend. Conveniently, the Bentley fitted neatly in the back of the helicopter, a facility that the British Motor Company works team could only have dreamed of in the 1960s.

Afternote. Having caught the bug for classic rallying, Martin and David entered again the next year, finishing first in class and very creditably in the top 10.



ENDPIECE (Editor)

Getting Old

When you are getting old, everything hurts.

What doesn't hurt, doesn't work!

- The gleam in your eye is the sun shining in your bi-focals.
- You feel like 'the morning after' - but you haven't been anywhere.
- Your children begin to look middle-aged.
- You join a health club, but don't go.
- You have all the answers - but no one asks you the questions.
- You look forward to a dull evening.
- You need glasses to find your glasses.
- You turn out the light for economy instead of romance.
- You sit in the rocking chair and can't make it go.
- Your knees buckle, but your belt won't.
- Your back goes out more than you do.
- Your house is too big - and your medicine cupboard is not big enough.
- You sink your teeth into a steak - and they stay there.
- Your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles.

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Apparently in a small town somewhere in the USA there is a large factory that will only recruit married men. One of the local women, one Brenda Davy, a feisty young lady, was angry about this and demanded to speak to the manager to find out why.

- Brenda demanded to know, *'Why is it you limit your employees to married men? Is it because you think women are weak, dumb, cantankerous.....or what?'*
- *'Not at all, Ma'am,'* the Factory Manager replied. *'It's because our employees are used to obeying orders, are accustomed to being shoved around, know how to keep their mouths shut and don't pout when I yell at them.'*