



PROBUS



RECORDER

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

As you are all probably aware, the last couple of weeks have been interesting - to put it mildly! My first job is to thank the many people who contacted me with best wishes, along with the wonderful staff at Salisbury hospital who took such good care of me, so much so, that after the first day there, I felt something of a fraud as rest and recuperation made me feel so much better. The procedure (not really an operation) where the doctors implanted my new stent was stress free, to the extent that I almost fell asleep! You may remember that I set myself a target of losing sufficient weight to get down to 13 stone by the end of my term as chairman. Well, I've achieved that and more, and rather than my exercise regime being the cause of my heart attack, I believe everything could well have been a lot worse had I not tried improving my fitness levels. If that encourages anyone else, then I for one will be very happy. However, I'm afraid that I won't be at the next meeting as I slowly work my way back to fitness and being capable of continuing to support my wife.

As ever, our talks continue to entertain and inform, and we have a real humdinger coming up when Club member Paul Hooley gives a preview of his latest book 'Göring's Suicide'. We have contacted local history groups as well as U3a and it would be great if we could support Paul with a good turnout. It will also be an excellent opportunity to showcase our Club and encourage future memberships.

April will also see three visits, which I hope are well supported as Peter has put in a lot of work researching and arranging these visits. We've always prided ourselves as a Club for providing such wide-ranging experiences for members to enjoy, apart from just talks and an open bar, post lecture!



Thank you to Andy Clement for stepping up on my behalf, and also to Dave Roberts who has kept me in touch with all the goings on as well as keeping members informed. I hope to attend Paul's talk, so until then please keep well.

John

WELFARE & SOCIAL

Welfare

- **John Owen.** In his Notes at the beginning of this issue John has provided a very eloquent statement of “where he is at”, but from the Club’s perspective I feel certain members all want to wish John a full and speedy recovery, and that we can look forward to seeing him again before too long.
- **Phil Butler and Jeffrey Hall.** It has been good to see Phil and Jeffrey attending recent meetings, and we continue to wish them well in their personal routes to recovery, with the hope that further impetus is provided by warmer and sunnier weather.
- Former member **John Adams.** Our Chairman John Owen met John Adams recently while both were on their respective “health walks”. The latter asked that his best wishes be made known to those who remember him.

Social – April Club Events

Tuesday 14th April 2026	GÖRING’S SUICIDE ‘They Will Not Hang Me!’ <i>Paul Hooley</i>
Wednesday 22nd April 2026	<u>Outing</u> Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra <i>Organ Symphony</i>
Tuesday 28th April 2026 (Wives/Partners)	Concorde <i>Rosie Thompson</i> Lunch: The Walnut Tree, Mere (12:30 for 13:00)
Wednesday 29th April 2026	<u>Outing</u> Walking Tour of Bradford-on-Avon <i>“A Tale of Wool and Waywardness”</i>



Reports on March's TALKS

3rd March 2026

Lt Cdr Tony Ellerbeck DSC

“A Most Unusual Season”



Lt Cdr Tony Ellerbeck DSC was the Flight Commander of the two Scout helicopters aboard HMS Endurance, the Navy's Ice Patrol Vessel, in the South Atlantic in 1982 when he suddenly found himself at the sharp end of an escalating conflict.

Tony began his talk by explaining the role of HMS Endurance at the time of the Falklands War. The map on the right provides perspective, with the Falkland Isles being circled in red with the dependency of South Georgia lying



some way to their East.

HMS Endurance was near the Falkland Isles at the time of the Argentine invasion, and Tony told us how they listened to the farmers' radio net as the Argentines brought all their heavy equipment ashore, and so they knew what was going on from the start. They had reported



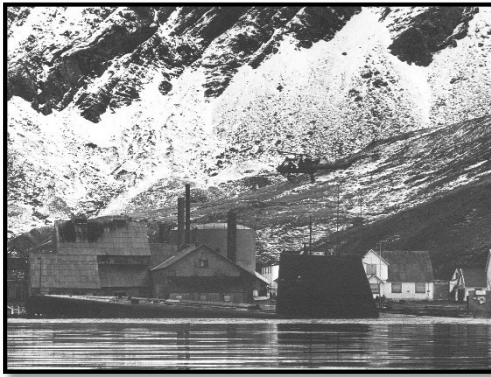
everything straight back to London, but of course there was nothing they could have done, and so with London's blessing they had sailed back to the South Georgia area. The FO back in London told them to stay in in the area in order to use their sophisticated communications to listen in on Argentine operations.

As HMS Endurance arrived back in the area of Grytviken, South Georgia, they monitored

Argentine ship movements, and Tony witnessed the Argentinians put ashore their first landing party on South Georgia; subsequently he dropped our own Special Forces onto the island in response to those landings.

Tony then told of his attack on the Argentine submarine 'Santa Fe' in the area of Grytviken harbour. He gave a detailed account of what actually went on, in particular his own part in attacking with AS12 missiles, the greatest damage being to the area of the submarine's fin.





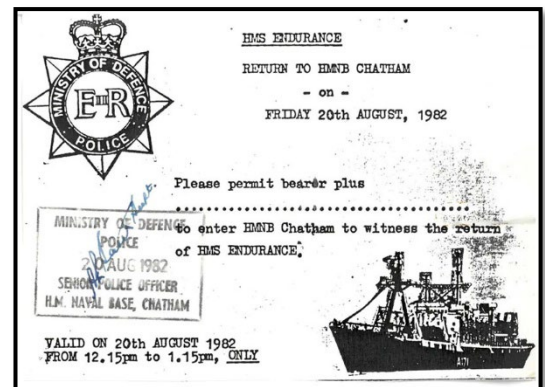
The end result of that particular operation ended with the submarine being totally immovable in Grytviken harbour, as shown on the left.

This was the first time ever that a guided missile of this sort had been fired in anger by the Royal Navy.

In telling his tales from the South Atlantic, Tony gave a fascinating insight into their relations with the Argentine Navy. He explained how many friendships had formed between Navies before the conflict, and that many of them continue to this day on a personal basis.

Tony finished his reminiscences by explaining that HMS Endurance was the last ship to return from the South Atlantic after the war, and that because of their role it was kept a very 'low key' and unreported event. They returned to HM Naval Base Chatham on 20th August 1982, and it was very subdued after a very long deployment.

Following questions, the Chairman thanked Tony for a fascinating and very comprehensive account of his time with HMS Endurance.



17th March 2026

Lt Gen David Leakey, CMG, CVO, CBE

30 Years a Soldier

Reflections and a Look Ahead



The Club remained in military reminiscence mode for the month, with the second talk being given by General David Leakey, this time speaking very much off the cuff about how he looked back on his nearly 40 years in the Army, and the main features and influences remaining in his memory today.

The General began by explaining his military background and the major experiences that flowed from this. He set the scene by explaining that at the time he entered the Army – into the Royal Tank Regiment (RTR), the UK's military 'poise' was utterly dictated by the Cold War. This meant that he joined the large element of the Army known as BAOR situated in what was then West Germany. He explained what life was like at the time, with soldiers and families living in such a way that the force could deploy ready for battle with the Warsaw Pact within hours of any warning. It gave its own slant to the 'military society' then in existence.

From this flowed his experiences in Canada which provided the British Army with its most realistic training (including live firing of all weapon systems) based on the plains of Alberta, Canada. It was called British Army Training Unit, Suffield (BATUS). He explained that this was a vital way of readying the Army for its main task and ran through some personal aspects of the experience.



At the same time, he explained how his regiment (like many others – Armour, Infantry, Artillery, Engineers, etc) was taken out of the line-of-battle in Germany in order to undertake a completely different role in Northern Ireland, and he explained the effects on the military of doing this. The role changed things completely; it became a “Corporal’s War” because that was the level at which



operations tended to be carried out and at which operating decisions had to be taken. And it was why training for these types of operations took almost as long as the operational deployments themselves. It also meant that the British Army became acknowledged throughout the Western world as masters of these types of operations.



However, General David went on to talk about how he has seen so many things change, and how they continue to change. He acknowledged the very different operating scenarios with which the UK is now faced, and how the manpower base has been eroded since the end of the Cold War. He opened up some interesting thoughts as to how the manpower base of the Army might have to be developed to meet new challenges. In doing so, he set out some of his own thoughts as to the possible problems that recruiting might face in the future, and also whether forms of ‘conscription’ or ‘enforced service’ might have to be re-introduced in some form or other.

It was a fascinating window onto current military problems and how they might be addressed if the military – and the Army in particular – is called upon to meet new challenges.

Following questions, the Chairman thanked General David for his very frank and extremely thought-provoking talk.

N.B. A report on the talk ‘**Films of the 1960s**’ given on the last day of March will appear in the **April edition** of the Recorder.

ENDPIECE
(Editor)



“Pondering”

As I was lying around, pondering the problems of the world, I realized that at my age I don't really give a rat's ass anymore.

If walking is good for your health, the postman would be immortal. A whale swims all day, only eats fish, drinks water, but is still fat. A rabbit runs and hops and only lives 15 years, while a tortoise doesn't run and does mostly nothing, yet it lives for 150 years. And you tell me to exercise? I don't think so.

Please just grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked, the good fortune to remember the ones I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference.

Now that I'm older here's what I've discovered:

1. I started out with nothing, and I still have most of it.
2. My wild oats are mostly enjoyed with prunes and all-bran.
3. I finally got my head together, and now my body is falling apart.
4. Funny, I don't remember being absent-minded.
5. Funny, I don't remember being absent-minded.
6. If all is not lost, then where the heck is it ?
7. It was a whole lot easier to get older, than to get wiser.
8. Some days, you're the top dog, some days you're the hydrant.
9. I wish the buck really did stop here; I sure could use a few of them.
10. Kids in the back seat cause accidents.
11. Accidents in the back seat cause kids.
12. It's hard to make a comeback when you haven't been anywhere.
13. The world only beats a path to your door when you're in the bathroom.
14. If God wanted me to touch my toes, he'd have put them on my knees.
15. When I'm finally holding all the right cards, everyone wants to play chess.
16. It's not hard to meet expenses ... they're everywhere.
17. The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth.
18. These days, I spend a lot of time thinking about the hereafter ... I go somewhere to get something and then wonder what I'm “here after”.
19. Funny, I don't remember being absent-minded.