



PROBUS RECORDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM DORSET - No. 176 - June 2019
(www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk)

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Welcome to you all – from the ‘new boy on the block’. It is somewhat daunting to take over as your Chairman when there are so many previous Chairmen in the body of the audience, but I already owe them my thanks for their friendly and supportive words.

I must begin by thanking Ron Walker for the time and effort that he put into ensuring that the Club functioned smoothly under his Chairmanship, and thereby our continued enjoyment of the social fruits of our association. He did a splendid job and left a smooth running organisation which I take over with pride and optimism. Our numbers continue to show a committed membership but we always need to be on the look-out for new members, and for that reason ask that all of you encourage appropriate friends and neighbours to join Probus by making them aware of our aims and ways, majoring on our sociability and inclusiveness.

Towards that end, I feel sure that Roger Lester will continue to provide us with an excellent

programme of speakers, while John Owen takes over the baton of Social Coordinator from Colin Chamberlain who has provided an interesting and varied schedule of visits. In addition, Roger Ellis has thrown himself into the Lunch Organiser's role with his customary verve. While these members provide the core of our social programme, I wish also to pay tribute to all the other members of the Club's Committee who keep the show on the road in exemplary fashion.

FUTURE EVENTS

11 June

Speaker: **Rachel Bellamy**

‘Safe and Well’

25 June

Speaker: **David Crump**

‘The Musical World of David Crump’

*Lunch at the Montague Arms, Shepton Montague, BA9 8JW. 12.30 for 12.45

27 June

Golf at Long Sutton

21 August

Summer Barbeque at The Crown, Marnhull

This year's Probus Committee	
Chairman	Nick Hall
Vice Chairman	Roger Ellis
Secretary	Colin Chamberlain
Treasurer	Phil Butler
Welfare Officer	Gordon Banks
Social Coordinator	John Owen
Speaker Secretary	Roger Lester
Newsletter Editor	Richard Clarke
Press Secretary	Peter Marshall
Scribe	Alan Jeffs
Lunch Organiser	Roger Ellis
Webmaster	Peter Grange

The most important aspect of Club life for the immediate future is to make a decision as to where we hold our future meetings; in other words whether we move from the Olive Bowl to pastures new. It is very early in the process, and I will set out the pros and cons as fully as I am able, but I ask that you all keep an open mind on the subject. It is all too easy to stick with the known world – while continuing to rumble at its perceived shortcomings!

Finally, and in spite of me being absent from the first meeting after my induction (!), I hope that the coming year will prove happy and fulfilling for all of us, and for my own part I will try to make Probus help towards fulfilling this aim. *Nick Hall*

Rev Andy Muckle - 'From Vet to Vicar'- 14 May

The guest speaker on the occasion of our AGM was the Rev Andy Muckle. Andy is nearing the end of his curacy at St Mary the Virgin church, Gillingham. He gave an amusing talk about his life journey from working as a qualified vet to becoming an Anglican priest.

The son of a draughtsman and a teacher, Andy was born at Walton on Thames. After deciding at the tender age of 13 years that he wanted to be a vet, true to his vision, in 1988 he arrived at the Bristol Veterinary School for training. Before this, whilst in the sixth form at school, in the summer he worked as a cleaner at a convent of Franciscan nuns in Guildford.



Andy really discovered his faith at university, being confirmed in 1989, gradually feeling the stirrings of a call into ministry

After qualification as a vet, he worked in three practices over a career spanning 21 years, returning back to home territory in a large mixed practice in Staines and surrounding towns. Andy recalled incidents at work – such as having to give resuscitation to a 94 years-old lady's budgie to the music of Cliff Richard's song 'congratulations'; castrating a horse on television, and having to certify a cow as dead (it was in two pieces!) after it had wandered on to the railway line.

Andy got as much satisfaction from dealing with the human owners as the animals, many of whom looked forward to his visits.. Back in Devizes, he met his future wife Becky. Their first child, a baby boy, Finn, sadly died shortly after birth; it was a couple

of years later in church that he felt that God was calling him to serve.

Andy and Becky now have a young daughter – Isla (*all pictured above*). He trained for the ministry at the college of the Resurrection, Mirfield, Yorkshire, before being placed by the

Bishop of Salisbury to become a curate in Gillingham. He will now be seeking a parish to serve as a Parish Priest.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions. Our new club Chairman Nick Hall gave the vote of thanks. *Alan Jeffs*

Editor's Note: Since his talk to our Probus Club, Rev Andy Muckle has been appointed to be Vicar of Dorset village of West Moors, near Ferndown and Verwood. It is their gain and Gillingham's loss.

Ice, Fire and Fjords – Mike Spencer - 28 May 2019

Former software analyst Mike Spencer lives in Cucklington. He has given talks to our club before – about his charity walks to support St Margaret's Hospice (*Great Wall of China; Foothills of the Himalayas*). This talk was a little different – mainly about Iceland (the country, not the supermarket!), and his trip there in 2017, and showing photographs of some of the spectacular scenery of the North Atlantic island. He also took part in two treks – one for charity, one for pleasure, in this challenging terrain.

The island is now a popular tourist stop, and tourism is a significant contributor to the mixed economy, alongside the traditional industry of fishing. The population of the country is



relatively small – about 350,000, and an area of 40,000 square miles. The centre of the island is uninhabited, with the population spread mainly round the coastal strip. This country was formed (indeed *is* being formed) as a result of volcanic action, and sits on two tectonic plates, with the mid-Atlantic rift running through it. The capital Reykjavik in the South-West and its surrounding areas is home to over

two-thirds of the population. Formerly under Danish rule, it became independent in 1918, and a republic in 1944.

Iceland runs on its source of renewable energy – geothermal and hydropower, providing all of its electricity requirements.

Some of Mike Spencer's slides showed examples of the variety of wildlife and flora in and around the island – including puffins, the migratory arctic tern, arctic fox, and the Icelandic horse. The surrounding seas are rich in marine life, including seals, whales (including the hunted Minke whale), dolphins, harbour porpoises, and many fish species.

At the time that the first settlers arrived in the ninth century, Iceland was largely covered in forest, but over the centuries there has been extensive deforestation combined with continuing volcanic activity, overgrazing, glacier movement and changes in climate. There are large areas of bare rock and stony deserts, larva fields and glaciers. Vegetation is low-growing due to the windy conditions.

Tourists following the tourist trails are able to view the dramatic waterfalls, glaciers and larva fields, bathe in thermal pools, search the sky for the Northern Lights, and marvel at the hot water spouts emerging from underground. There is still strong volcanic activity; the relatively

strong volcanic eruption on 2010 threw up such a huge cloud of ash that it grounded air traffic across Europe for 10 days.

Mike's impressive photographs showed the truly rugged beauty of this island country and some of its flora and fauna. This was an interesting talk and presentation. Roger Ellis gave the vote of thanks. *Alan Jeffs*

Peter Marshall continues his series of past talks by members

Richard Clarke – 'My Tehran Years' - December, 2012

Richard studied at Exeter University from 1962-1965 and after a trip to USA with the British University North America Club, he returned to the UK and found his first job at the Electrical Times. As Richard said: "They thought I might make a journalist and I hit lucky. The editor and his assistant were professionals, prepared to guide me."

He resigned in 1966 and set out with friends by car for Tehran, the capital of Iran. Short of money, he found a job as a sub-editor on The Tehran Journal, an English language newspaper dealing with Iranian news – most of which was the Shah's doings. After a while, Richard was promoted and met many interesting Iranians, but they assumed all Englishmen were spies! This was the time when the imperial government was confronting the rising tide of Arab nationalism. On one occasion, Richard was taken away for interrogation for some hours but after the British Ambassador intervened, nothing further was heard of the incident. But some months later, the Editor returned to England and named Richard as his successor – he became editor of a Persian national newspaper at 25.

They were grossly understaffed, he said, but all went well until he promoted a young American to edit the feature page and she ran a story critical of the Saudi government, which was an ally of the Shah. Richard said: "I of course was responsible and was told my labour permit was withdrawn." So he returned to England and through contacts he had made in Tehran, he got an interview with the Financial Times and stayed there for 31 years.

Material for the July edition of the Recorder should be sent to Richard Clarke on:
richardpclarke69@gmail.com