

PROBUS RECORDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM DORSET - No. 178 - September 2019 (www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk)



After more than 30 years as a member, Robin Richardson left us during September to join his family in Yorkshire. To wish him well, a group of his fellow members who also joined Probus "in the last century" (see above) gave him a farewell party in the August sunshine at Peter Marshall's house in Wyke. They were joined by the chairman, Nick Hall, and other club officers, to thank Rob for his support and friendship over the years. In the 1990s, Rob served as Vice Chairman and Chairman, and then as Social Secretary for five years.



Chairman's Notes

It is always sad to have to write of a person's departure from life, but it is fitting that I do so in the case of Ralph Jerram. He has been a stalwart member of

the Club for many years and will probably be best remembered for his jokey and punning ways, especially when reporting to meetings regarding members' welfare.

I wish to place on record our appreciation of the work that he undertook on behalf of the Club in his various appointments. Apart from being

effective in his tasks, he was a noted raconteur, and was also known for being a 'natty dresser', his choice of ties being particularly noteworthy. Our thoughts and heartfelt best wishes go out to Freda and their children at this difficult time for them.

On a lighter note, although Robin Richardson will not be appearing at future meetings, we wish him well with his move to take up residence with his Yorkshire-based son. He will be missed, and we thank him for his fellowship over the years.

FUTURE EVENTS

1 October

Speaker: **Robert Wellen** 'Bell Ringers from Dorset and Wiltshire who died in World War I'

15 October

Speaker: **Sam Woodcock** 'Nostalgic Gillingham'

23 October

BSO Concert at Poole Lighthouse. Travel by coach

29 October

Speaker: **Mike Gould** Future Development of

Gillingham

Lunch at Kimbers Farm Shop 12.30 for 12.45 Moving to more mundane matters, we have now had two meetings in our new venue, and although it will take time to fully 'bed in', members seem to be enjoying the airiness and warmth of the Rugby Club as well the improved crispness of the presentation imagery. (The sound system is being worked on as I write!)

We have enjoyed two excellent talks since returning from our August break. At the beginning of September, Major-General 'Chip' Chapman gave us a very informative talk on his experiences as a young Royal Marine officer engaged in the Falklands War, creating much thought as to 'where were you when ...'. And following that, Doctor Ed Derbyshire provided an interesting talk on the technology spin-offs from the various space programmes over the years. The next three talks look to be bringing us back closer to home, culminating at the end of October with a look at what's being proposed for the development of Gillingham over the next few years.

There has been an enjoyable outing to cricket at the Ageas Bowl at Southampton to watch Hampshire's cricketing prowess, courtesy of Peter Marshall, and we look forward to David Bryan's next BSO extravaganza towards the end of October. In addition, Roger Ellis ran another Club Golf Day in early September. Thanks to all of you for taking so much trouble to organise and co-ordinate these events.

I will not be at the next meeting, which will be chaired by Roger Ellis as Vice-Chairman, and I expect that by the time that I return we will all be starting to 'hunker down' as the days get shorter and temperatures fall. Despite that, I am sure that we will remain upbeat about our Club life - and look forward to enjoying everything that is on offer. *Nick Hall*

Major-General Clive (Chip) Chapman 'The Falklands War – my role in the downfall of General Galtieri' – 3 September

Wiltshire resident Chip Chapman is a retired Major-General, whose current professional work apart from writing books and articles, includes advising on security matters, told us about his role in the Falklands Campaign in 1982, including the battle of Goose Green.

The sovereignty of the British dependent South Atlantic territories of the Falkland Islands, and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, had long been claimed by Argentina. In the period leading up to the invasion, Argentina had experienced large-scale civil unrest against the ruling military junta sparked by economic hardship and poor living conditions endured by the majority of the population. A new junta, headed by General Leopoldo Galtieri, came into office in December 1981. By opting for military action to take over the islands by invasion, the junta hoped to mobilise the patriotic feelings of Argentinians to divert attention from economic problems at home.

Tension had increased in March 1982 between the UK and Argentina after a group of Argentine 'scrap metal merchants' raised the Argentine flag on South Georgia. This precipitated the invasion of the Falkland Islands on 2 April.

Having joined the British Army in 1980 in the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment (2 Para), Chip Chapman was a young platoon commander at the time of the conflict. The battalion was part of the task force assembled to seize back the Falklands; 2 Para embarked on 26 April 1982 aboard the North Sea ferry MV Morland, which had been requisitioned as a troop ship. The vessel was one of the ships entering San Carlos Water during the amphibious landings.



The Argentines had met minimal resistance when taking the islands; the British Government, headed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and forming a War Cabinet, had resolved to assemble and despatch a task force to sail and retake the Falklands.

So, 2 Para left Portsmouth on 26 April, arriving at Ascension Island on 7 May, where landing drills were practised. The force landed at Blue Beach, San Carlos Water on 21 May. The troops of 2 Para moved off to Sussex Mountain to form a defensive position, where they were pounded by enemy aircraft. The commanding officer of 2 Para was Lt Col Herbert Jones (later killed at the battle of Goose Green on 28 May). The weather was bad, the health of the soldiers was degrading (trench foot for some), but comradeship and morale proved to be decisive. During this period, several ships had been lost, including SS Atlantic Surveyor, HMS Coventry, HMS Ardent, HMS Sheffield, and HMS Antelope.

By 25 May, Lt Chapman was aware of the plan to seize the initiative, and for 2 Para to attack the garrison at Goose Green, at the Western end of East Falkland. On 28 May, despite being pitted against a larger enemy force without adequate artillery support, and losing their commanding officer H Jones and suffering other casualties (18 killed, 44 wounded), the entire Argentine garrison was captured or killed.

Major-General Chapman went on to explain the wider actions in the war aimed at taking Port Stanley including 2 Para's involvement with other forces in the battle of Wireless Ridge (*pictured above*), leading to the surrender of the Argentines on 14 June. His talk, with photographs, gave a dramatic explanation of the Falklands campaign by someone who was in the thick of the action. John Houchin gave the vote of thanks. *Alan Jeffs*

Dr Ed Derbyshire – 'Space in everyday Life' - 17 September

Ed Derbyshire has spent many years working in the space industry for companies involved in the design and launch of space satellites. He is an experienced speaker on subjects connected with space; he gave a talk to our club in 2018 on the uses of satellites in such areas as weather forecasting, crop management, atmospheric analysis, and archaeology. This talk looked at some of the positive benefits arising from work by NASA and the Space Industry, things used in many commercial applications affecting our lives.

One example of this is the low-weight carbon fibre in satellites, the technology has led to the carbon fibre blades worn by paraplegic athletes; another is the application of robot technology in the production of prosthetic limbs. As technology improves, it is envisaged that robots could even replace humans in exploring other planets.

The obvious need to reduce the weight of equipment and materials used in space has led to many spin-offs. Low-weight 'space blankets' used in the International Space station are in first aid kits, for survival blankets and camping equipment. Freeze drying of food was developed from the research for the Apollo missions.

The small cameras built into mobile phones are the result of the development of space cameras. The modern thermometer was developed for astronauts

The science of computer modelling to work out the best angle of descent for the space shuttle returning to earth in the most stress efficient way has even been applied to the design of golf balls and golf clubs! Space suits and boots incorporate heating elements to protect astronauts from temperatures as low as -150°c has led to the use of heating elements in ski boots and gloves.

Transparent ceramic material is now used for teeth braces (less unattractive than the old metal braces). Technology for protecting space equipment from scratching led to scratch resistant lenses for glasses, and the accurate measurement and control necessary for docking of space vehicles is used by ophthalmologists to track rapid eye movements while carrying out laser eye surgery.

Light-weight and strong tiles used for the underside of the space shuttle — carbon reinforced — is the same material as graphite tennis racquets and racing car bodies. Solar panel technology for the generation and storage of electricity is now familiar to us in the form of solar panels, and one very useful spin-off is battery development and cordless tools, such as drills, screwdrivers and vacuum cleaners.

There was collaboration between NASA and medical scientists in the invention of militarised heart pumps for patients awaiting heart transplants. Also, MRI scanning equipment for hospitals (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) uses the technology employed for measuring the magnetic fields of planets. And a NASA engineer developed cochlear implants. 'Memory Foam' used for insulation in space is now used in mattresses, pillows, aircraft, and motor vehicles.

Dr Derbyshire explained other spin-offs. Possibly some of these things would eventually have been invented anyway, but at the very least the space industry was the catalyst for invention and progress.

In giving the vote of thanks, Peter Marshall recalled his former professional involvement in the space industry, and the rapid progress of invention and innovation in the last decades. *Alan Jeffs*

Book Review

The Russian Lieutenant by Peter Marshall

This is the author's first novel having had several technical factual books published. It is using some of his experiences while working. It is based round security services and agencies in Russia and the UK, internet dating, a Russian lieutenant and a worker in the Portsmouth dockyard. There is also an issue round the poisoning events in Salisbury. As an aficionado of thriller, crime and espionage I approached this work with interest to see how a new entrant into this field succeeded in holding my interest. I found it a most intriguing and believable novel which needed and got my full attention. I recommend it as good read and wish it had been longer. It seemed to me that the story kept my concentration and was detailed in the same way as novels by Frederick Forsyth and Frank Gardiner. I did not want to put it down until I had finished it.

I await the next novel from this author eagerly as it will be interesting in its own right but also will hopefully reveal the truth of what happened in the final chapters. *Ian McLellan*

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