



# PROBUS RECORDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET - No. 188 - September 2020  
([www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk](http://www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk))

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## CHAIRMAN'S JOTTINGS - FROM NICK HALL

I am writing this on 26<sup>th</sup> August and I am reminded by a little guy who pops up on my computer screen that this was the day a man called Charles Thurber patented the type writer in 1843. Interestingly (well, to me at least) his original intention was to build a machine to help the blind – it had raised letters on the keys – and his first letter using the machine was to the Boston Institution for the Blind to tell them about his invention. I wonder what he would have thought of today's equivalent of computers with special keyboards, including a Braille one, for the visually impaired?

### Way Forward

Enough of such meanderings – I would like to bring you up to date with the thinking and actions of your Committee.

After many weeks of 'lock-down' - which means different things to different people - there has been some change in the outlook for a return to holding social meetings for our Club.

In looking to the well-being of the Club as a whole, it has been necessary to take account of Government guidance/rules while appreciating that individual members will wish to apply their own personal risk assessment to whatever is allowed under that guidance. Because the Club is always going to be parasitic in its operation, it has been necessary to follow what the Government refers to as "Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities" – through its application by our host body, the Rugby Club.

Your Committee is currently in active discussion with the Rugby Club as to what might – or might not – be possible. While at the time of writing we can't provide notice of a specific event for Probus members, we are hopeful that notification of such an event will be forthcoming before the next issue of the Recorder.

## WELFARE NEWS .....from Gordon Banks.

Not a lot of news this month – which is good news.

**Bertram Akhurst** had a fall, nothing broken and in good spirits.

**Richard Clarke** is steady.

**Peter Nation** has an eye appointment for next week.

And some items on Members (from those HOT August days!) –

**Graham Strood** is looking for someone to instal air conditioning!

**David and Daphne Bryan** are planning to move to Scotland in a month or two to be closer to their family and new grandson (and for cooler weather!)

**John and Chris Houchin** are also on the move northwards, but only into Wiltshire!

And finally .....

*An Englishman wants to emigrate to Australia. The immigration official asks: Do you have a criminal record?*

*"No," says the Englishman. "Do I still need one?"*

## Some Thoughts on our Health by Ian McLellan

We are being warned about the possibility of a second wave of Covid 19. Here are some personal thoughts about what we can do to keep well and support the NHS over the next few months.

We are told the second wave may be up to twice as bad as the first and could coincide with a flu epidemic. If this were to happen, the NHS could be overwhelmed for two basic reasons. Firstly, the number of Covid and flu patients would soar as would their needs and secondly, the increasing number of NHS workers becoming sick from both would also limit services. So, the first thing we can do is get a flu vaccination when they become available. I have been told this will be in September. The second thing to do is maintain guidelines of social distancing, masks, etc., and make our own decisions about avoiding 'hot spots'.

Because of our age group and the data which shows our risk level of getting a more severe response to the disease we must not forget that the acute disease period can be followed by a range of consequences. These include severe lung disease possibly progressive in some, continued loss of smell/taste and effects on the brain and heart. Even those with mild disease can get these. However, the most common is muscle fatigue and listlessness, similar to that following other viral illnesses. The important thing to know is that all of these may continue for a long period – having the disease is not the end of the story.

Because of other diseases coupled with our age we must realise we would not necessarily be offered the full range of interventions such as ventilation by the clinical team. They would make decisions on an individual basis. We should also realise that if we have concerns about how far and what interventions we would accept, we should make our wishes known to our health care team. Putting this into context, I have a medical friend the same age as me who has in advance written refusal of ventilation for Covid. One more tip, I keep a print-out of my medical history, prescriptions and activity/fitness level available for the clinical team if I should fall ill. Stay safe.

### MEMBERS FORUM (contributions please....)

Dear Members

Thank you all for the card and good wishes for my 100 years on 11<sup>th</sup> July and I trust we will be able to meet again in the not too distant future.

All the best, Horace Erridge

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Dear All,

I have just read Ian's very interesting article on the Rawson family. However, I do take issue with the last paragraph where he states that little or no interest is paid and no enquiries seem to come from USA. For a number of years there has been a Rawson family tree on permanent display in the Museum. Further, we have often had enquiries and even visits from our American brethren tracing their family tree. On two separate occasions I have ferried groups of US visitors along Bowerage Hill and down into Colesbrook – not on the Constable trail but following the footsteps of Rawson/Taft. In fact, we gave a copy of the family tree to one person who subsequently presented it to Senator Taft of Ohio who is a direct descendant of President Taft. I submit the above not in any way as a criticism but just to set the record straight!

With kind regards,

Sam Woodcock.

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Dear Editor

I would like to thank Sam for pointing out there is some knowledge of Edward Rawson in Gillingham and for the hard work he has put in taking visitors round. He has rightly corrected me, but his comment has shown support for the issue I raised. He personally and the Museum have assisted any visitors from the USA who have visited. That is excellent, but not my point which is that the town rather than the Museum and History Society do not know about this important man and have not taken the pro-active step of trying to get, through publicity in the USA, an increased tourist footfall over the years. Edward Rawson is known not only to his descendants but also to the wider Massachusetts residents as there is great interest in this early legislator and state administrator. Contact with the descendants and others via social media or even through the Boston Globe and other newspapers would increase the profile of Gillingham.

Ian McLellan

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Dear Editor

Further to Chris Spencer's piece containing a lot of well thought out wisdom, I would like to add to the debate. The following letter never received a reply, so I then sent a copy to the chief engineer, no reply. The concept gives us a little hope that one day humanity might do this - think of all the wind farms across the world (for example in China) using storage which would give constant CLEAN electricity. Chris's point about hydrogen and electrolysis (a method of producing it) uses electricity. Regarding electric cars – there is not a lot of point if the creation of the electricity is by "dirty" means. The company I wrote to produced the storage system mentioned in the letter copied below.....

Dave Hooker

To The Design Team

**Clean Energy Storage.** A Swiss Company has developed a system to store energy by raising heavy concrete weights to a platform with an electric motor. *They have produced a working prototype.* So, in the case of a wind farm for example, when excess electricity is required to be stored to even out the vagaries of the wind, the motor lifts the weights as gravitational storage and when required the motor is driven in reverse by the gravitational energy as the weight is lowered, thereby generating electricity. **The principle of storing energy by gravity is now a proven fact.**

<https://qz.com/1355672/stacking-concrete-blocks-is-a-surprisingly-efficient-way-to-store-energy/>.

Port Dinorwic in North Wales stores energy by pumping water up to a lake and then releases it to fall and enter the same reversible turbine which then generates electricity for use at off-peak times. A proven technology.

**A Better Way.** A tower is constructed with three vertical slots equispaced around its circumference. Inside the tower is a reversible electrical generator of the same type that is used successfully at Port Dinorwic. The three horizontal arms are connected to a drum inside the tower and pass through the slots to a heavy "doughnut" ring on the outside. The generator lifts the drum and ring to store gravitational electricity when the wind blows. It can be released to fall under controlled conditions i.e. doing work to generate electricity. A patent is only as valuable as the perceived money available to defend it. Clearly this needs the backing of a big company to turn the idea into a world beater. The world needs it to smooth the flow of electricity from wind farms.

I am a retired engineer – just the little guy. Humanity needs this urgently. Its over to you, gentlemen.



### CONN GAGE

Ex-member Conn Gage sadly passed away recently at the age of 87 at a nursing home in Sherborne. Lt Colonel Conn Gage was born in Suffolk but had strong family connections in Ireland where the family at one point owned the island of Rathlin and where he still had a family home. Conn's family had a long history of military and naval service and on leaving school, he enlisted into the Royal Engineers for two years of basic training at Sandhurst alongside the young King Hussain of Jordan.

Conn often talked about his love of the many experiences of army life, and the opportunities it gave him. Particularly the chance to learn to Cross Country Ski, in which he achieved considerable success. He became a leading light in managing the British Olympic Biathlon Team at the 1964 Winter Olympics. It gave him particular pleasure especially as it gave him the opportunity to visit Buckingham Palace for the first of a few encounters with The Queen. Conn left the army in 1998 after 47 years of service which included stints in Germany, Austria, Singapore and (his favourite), North Wales!

On a personal note, I met Conn shortly after moving here in 2013 and always enjoyed his company. He was a kind, quiet, unassuming man who enjoyed the simple things in life, the great outdoors and his beloved family. He leaves behind his wife Frances, two sons and a daughter and will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

John Owen

### ***“SOCIAL DISTANCING” MEETING FOR COFFEE ON THE GILLINGHAM TOWN MEADOW .....***



*The monthly Recorder continues to provide a regular link for Probus members during this long Covid19 period of self-distancing, etc. More contributions of interest to our members will be gratefully received for future issues – please send them to me, Peter Marshall (editor pro tem, until the delayed AGM). My e-mail address is: pmsatellites@btinternet.com*