



# PROBUS RECORDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET  
([www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk](http://www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk))

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## Chairman's Notes – Roger Ellis

### A Special Moment

Thank you to all the members of the Probus Club of Gillingham for allowing me to become your Chairman, and it was a very special moment when Nick let me wear the badge of office.

My predecessors, namely Nick himself - and including John Owen, Ron Walker, Phil Butler, and Peter Grange have set the bar very high and I cannot guarantee that I will be as good as any of them. I promise I will try.

We need to recruit new members and in the absence of a Publicity Officer I have to rely on all of you to tell friends, acquaintances, and anyone who will listen how good the Club is and what it has to offer. I will try to ensure that any special events we organise are featured in the local magazines.

The past fifteen months have been different, but sometimes I reflect on how lucky we are - or rather how fortunate I am. I have my health at the moment; I am able to look forward to playing golf with Ron Walker and friends once a week; I now have new colleagues at the West Somerset Railway, and I have the pleasure of washing my "Hairdresser's car". The only downside is my fellow volunteer at the Book Barn at Barrington Court<sup>1</sup> – who turns out to have a South African accent!

To be serious, when I think of the problems, both health and otherwise, that fellow members have endured I am very fortunate. Is everything as I would like it to be, no of course not and I still cry at the end of "Sleepless in Seattle" but then don't we all.

The Club is going to have a good year and I will try to make you all smile from time to time. Will Colin continue to refer to me as 'Susan', I hope so. God bless you all.

*Roger*



<sup>1</sup> Barrington Court – a [National Trust Property](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/barrington-court) near Ilminster.

## **WELFARE NEWS - Gordon Banks.**

**Welfare.** Maybe it's the result of seeing a bit more warmth, but this month's report is appreciably shorter. Long may it remain so.

**Brian Garton** is stable, and Sid is more settled and cheerful.

**Terry Wiles** has fallen three times and as a result has spent some time in Yeovil hospital. He may move to Tavistock, in order to be near to family.

*And now for something different:*

- The Prime Minister held a meeting with the cabinet today. He also spoke to the bookcase and argued with a chest of draws.
- A traffic Cop barked "pullover"! I said "no it's a cardigan, but thanks for noticing".
- Paddy: "I've bought a new clock; it goes eight days without winding".  
Mick: "How long does it go if you wind it?".



## **“Parish Notice” - the Editor**

This not meant as a play on words, but the following is a plea that has been received from St Mary's Church, Gillingham to ask if anyone might wish to step forward for the task of Treasurer.

### **St Mary's Church, Gillingham**

Our Church Treasurer stepped down at the end of 2020.

The Reverend Tim Heaton has taken on the work temporarily and the books are in straightforward and logical order. We have asked extensively around the church congregation both generally and specifically but have not found anyone with the right skills and willingness to take the role on.

The task seems to take about four hours or one morning a week.

This role is a great way to contribute to the community life of Gillingham. It does not need to be done by a member of the church. As such, it has been suggested to us that we might be successful in finding a willing volunteer from Probus.

If you wish to find out more about the matter, please contact:

Peter Greenwood – [greenwood@macace.net](mailto:greenwood@macace.net)



## THE CALL OF THE SEA – *Peter Marshall*

When I was chatting with a Probus friend about our impending move to Devon, he commented: “*I guess it’s the call of the sea*”. I nodded wisely, wondering whether it was just a nice turn of phrase – or perhaps something more profound? Is there a human impulse in some of us to go in search of the sea? Or is it just the same urge that drove thousands of thoughtless people to ignore the dangers of Covid19 and rush to Lulworth Cove, Bournemouth and elsewhere when the sun was shining??

So I turned to Google. I discovered that “*The Call of the Sea*” was the title of a silent British film in 1919, an East German film in 1951, a novel in 1966, a poem in 2015 and now a well-publicised video and computer game! So - nothing profound that I could see!

But “*the sea*” is certainly a fascination that I can recognise in my own life from very early days. Back in late 1930’s, my family went regularly for summer holidays from our home in Wiltshire to Weston-Super-Mare or Weymouth by train (my father worked for GWR so we benefited from his free passes!).

My lasting memory as a small boy on these trips was the magical moment on each visit when I could call out – “*I can see the sea*”. And the time spent with the family on the beach and in the water was always very special.



When war broke out in 1939, my older brother showed his attraction for the sea by volunteering for service in the Royal Navy – and he went on to spend five hazardous and eventful years including convoy escort duties in the Atlantic and a role in the D-Day landings. It was therefore no surprise that when my turn came for National Service in 1950, I used my brother’s successful naval career (he became a Lieutenant) to persuade the recruiting officer that I wanted to join the Navy. After a second interview, I was lucky enough to be one of the few to spend my two years in the Senior Service, mostly at sea. For the first six months I trained as a navigator on board HMS Vanguard, the last of Britain’s battleships; and



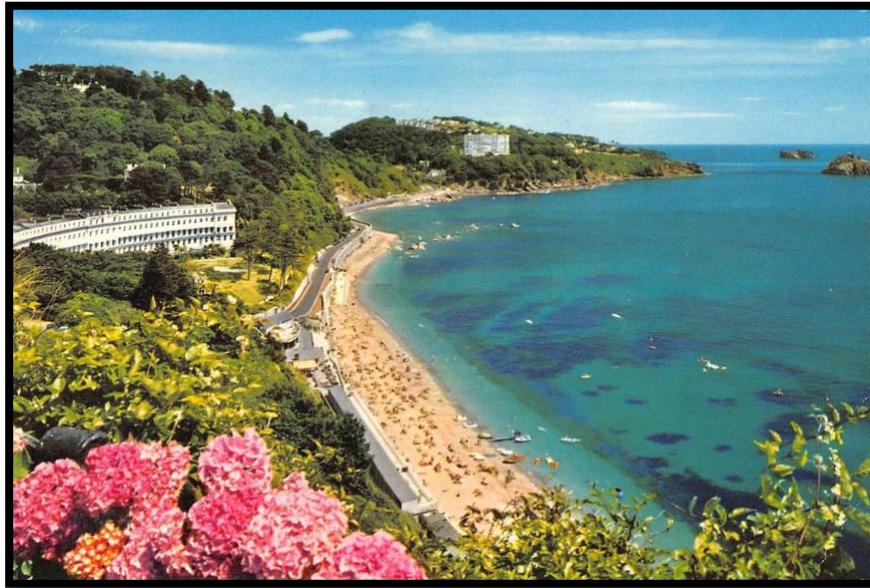
then by contrast I served on MTB’s (motor torpedo boats) battling through the varied weathers of the English Channel and the North Sea. Then came seven years as a reserve officer, doing two weeks of sea-time each year on minesweepers to update my navigation training. It was enough experience to last a lifetime!



After leaving the navy for journalism, I spent several years living and working in Portsmouth – with a sea view, of course. And then, as my career took me elsewhere in the world, holidays were usually spent on or close to the sea. And now we are moving home to Torquay, about which I have just found some surprising information. One of the geological periods some 400-million years ago is named as “*The Devonian Period*”. And why? It is because of the discovery in the

rocks of the Lummaton Quarry in Torquay of ammonites which, according to the experts, date from prehistoric marine life. The fossils apparently indicate that it was in this era, also known as the *Age of Fishes*, when fins gradually evolved into legs and our earliest ancestors began developing the means to leave the water and walk on land!! Any further explanation of the Lummaton discovery would require a greater scientific mind to understand. But I do recall reading somewhere about the origins of human life on earth being from the sea. Today, that quarry is part of the Barton industrial estate on the outskirts of the town, and I will drive past the location with greater respect in the future.

So, just maybe, the “Call of the Sea” is something rather profound after all – a sub-conscious signal for homo sapiens to return there some time. ***Torquay – here we come!***



## Endpiece for Today – *the Editor*



- The table at which Kaiser Wilhelm II signed the documents for the mobilization of the German Army and Navy on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1914 was made from oak taken from HMS Victory, and the stand for stationery on it was a model of the ship complete with the flags of Nelson’s famous signal.



- After the Japanese Admiral Togo had defeated the Russian fleet at the Battle of Tsushima in 1905, he waited to return to port until 21<sup>st</sup> October, the hundredth anniversary Trafalgar. He had attended the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, and thought he was literally a reincarnation of Nelson.