



PROBUS RECORDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET
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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – *Roger Ellis*

A Most Memorable Afternoon (Tuesday 27th July 2021)

As you will all know, this afternoon many of us were at the Scout HQ in Milton-on-Stour to celebrate Horace Erridge's 101st Birthday.

Thanks to the efforts of Peter Grange and Roger Lester, we were also joined by Gary Turner and Richard Sturman from Yeovilton Fleet Air Arm Base resplendent in their naval uniforms. I had told David, Horace's son, that we had hoped for some recognition from the Fleet Air Arm but I think we were all pleasantly surprised at the effort taken. You will see on the far left of the picture on the left, that our Birthday Boy was presented with a picture of the Navy's latest aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth. He also received a tankard and other gifts to make his day.



I am grateful to his son David for being the 'Erridge taxi', and we were all so pleased that Mary was able to join us as well. After a most enjoyable tea with sandwiches, scones, jam and cream, Peter Marshall, who had travelled up from Torquay to be with us,

gave us a short history of Horace's membership of the Probus Club and the various posts he has held. All those present were then asked to toast Horace – and to couple this with our thanks to Peter for all he has done for our Club.

For those of you who are not aware of Horace's background, can I refer you to the picture of his Birthday Cake. He served on HMS Argus on one of the Artic Convoys, worked for the London Brick Company for a good deal of his working life, and regularly played the drums in a jazz group until Covid put a stop to that hobby. If you have an interest in any of these three subjects just ask him to tell you about them, but don't expect to be home on time!



I never knew either of my Grandad's, who passed away before I was old enough to remember them. I said to David Erridge today I have always regarded Horace as my surrogate Grandad, and very proud I am indeed to know him - as we all are.

WELFARE and SOCIAL NEWS – *Gordon Banks*

Welfare. There is little to report this month, which is a healthy sign (no pun intended!).

Chas Allberry is awaiting the results of his recent Consultation.

Brian Garton is stable, but like many of us found the heat wearying.

Nick Hall is much improved following his 'rehabilitation' after hospitalisation but still awaits release from his driving restrictions. Because DVLA is currently non-functioning, this is being achieved through a mixture of his GP and Yeovil Hospital, and he hopes to be cleared by mid-August. He thanks sincerely all those who have provided good wishes for a safe recovery.

... and now for something different:

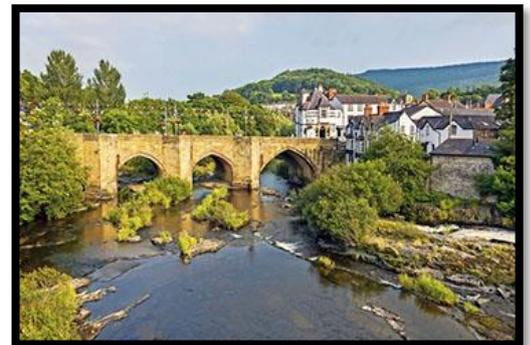
- What do you call a person who used to like tractors?
An ex-tractor fan.
- A man knocked at the door and said he was collecting for a swimming pool - So I gave him a glass of water to get him started.
- Is the top of a mountain called a summit because when people get there they are lost for words?



Memories of my home town - *John Owen*

As a proud Welshman who spent most of his life living in foreign parts (England), I still have fond memories of the 12 years I lived in Llangollen. The small town was an idyllic place to grow up in, small enough to know most people and places and yet with a history that mostly unfolded itself to me once I'd left.

The river Dee runs through the heart of Llangollen and has a bridge originally built in 1345, which is recognised as one of the '*Seven Wonders of Wales*'. It has salmon and trout and has regularly been used for national and international canoeing competitions. My brother used to sit astride the bridge fishing for trout to sell to the local hotel for breakfast! The town's surroundings are stunning, and the Dee valley boasts Valle Crucis Abbey built in 1201 by Prince Madog ap Gruffydd for the Cistercian Order. Turner visited the site in 1794 and the paintings hang in the National Gallery.

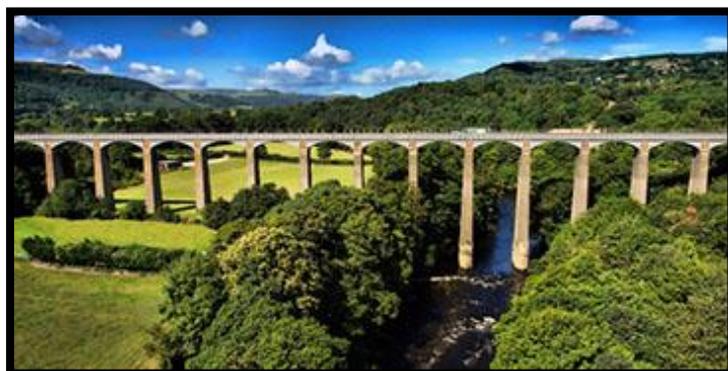


The Abbey ruins sit in idyllic and peaceful grounds at the foot of **The Horseshoe Pass**, which rises up to 1854 feet. The road up is a magnet for cyclists and bikers with its numerous twisting



hairpin bends and glorious views across the valley. Zig Zag Hill eat your heart out! High above the town sit the medieval ruins of Castell Dinas Bran (Crow Castle). Built in the 13th century, it was only occupied for about two decades before the forces of Edward I besieged, and finally destroyed it. The ruins continue to attract many hardy folk and offer fantastic views across the town, the entire valley and across to the rocky outcrops known as World's End.

The world famous **Pontcysyllte Aqueduct** was built in 1805 to Thomas Telford's design. It is 336 yards long, 4 yards wide and has a depth of 5feet 3 inches! It took ten years to build at a cost of £47,000. Amazingly, only one man died in its building due to Telford's meticulous planning. It remains a popular tourist destination as highlighted in a recent TV programme featuring Timothy West and Prunella Scales who were remembering their honeymoon on the canal at Llangollen. Sadly, its use was seriously curtailed by the introduction of the railway. Llangollen still operates a steam train service to and from Corwen.



The *'Two Ladies of Llangollen'* – Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby - were upper class Irish 'friends' who settled at Plas Newydd (New Place). The house, gardens and literary works are preserved despite their scandalising and yet fascinating, high society lives in the late 18th/early 19th centuries. They received many literary and distinguished visitors including Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Sir Walter Scott and The Duke of Wellington. Visiting them became a must for those on 'The European Tour'.

However, for me, the proudest memory I have of Llangollen is the story which surrounds the development of the International Eisteddfod in June 1947. Local men - Henry Tudor an officer of the British Council, W.S. Gwyn Williams who was musical director of the National Eisteddfod, and G.H. Northing a teacher and head of the town council - felt the need to bring peace and harmony to the world, through music, after 6 years of fighting. They planned and organised a choral competition for 40 international choirs. Two groups of Spanish dancers also arrived and thereafter the Eisteddfod became a festival of



song and dance. Local people raised the money to enable a choir from Lubeck in Germany to attend in 1949, and all competitors were put up by townsfolk - a tradition which is still largely in operation today. Since then, people from around the world have descended on Llangollen



dressed in their national costumes, decorating the town with a sea of colour, music and dance. While the choral competition remains the mainstay of the week, the closing Sunday concert has attracted the world's best singers and musicians. In 1953, Luciano Pavarotti sang in his father's choir from Modena and forty years later, gave the closing concert. He said it was this experience that convinced him to pursue a career in music. Wise man! - and so thank you Llangollen!



Endpiece for Today - Editor



When Khrushchev denounced Stalin at the 1956 Party Congress secret session, a delegate shouted out, “*Why did you not speak out while all this was going on?*” “*Who said that?*” demanded Khrushchev. There was silence. “*Now, said Khrushchev, you know why not.*”



A Russian in the days of the Soviet Union looking at this picture of Adam and Eve: “*No food, no clothes, and they think they’re in paradise – just like Russia.*”