



PROBUS RECORDER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROBUS CLUB OF GILLINGHAM, DORSET
(www.probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk)

Issue No. 200
September 2021

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – *Roger Ellis*

Over the past two or three years many of you have asked if Colin or myself have any information as to the whereabouts of our previous Treasurer and Chairman – **Chris Parkinson**. Neither of us have been able to tell you anything concrete except for various rumours that have circulated within the Gillingham community. I am therefore delighted to be able to update you as to the current situation.

The Probus Club of Gillingham recently received an application from Peter Hurst, who we met on our Zoom chat last Tuesday and who joined us at the Town Meadow on Friday. We did not realise that he had bought Chris's former home in Gillingham and had information as to where he was living and with whom.

Chris is living in Cranborne with Beverley, his widow's Goddaughter, and her partner. She tells Peter that he is physically and mentally frail which would correspond with how we saw him some three years ago when he came to one of our first meetings at the Rugby Club. I remember Chris with affection as I was Secretary to him when he was Chairman, and as we lived near to each other had many cups of tea and biscuits mulling over Club business.

I will ask for Colin's advice, but I would like to write to Beverley enclosing a letter addressed to Chris asking how he is but mentioning the names of all of you who have enquired as to his progress. I will include in this list the name of John Walker, who although he has resigned from the Club, always asks me if I have any information on his former friend.

I am not expecting an instant reply from Chris, and it may be that I get no reply at all, but at least some of your names might jog his memory and take him back to happier times. I will keep you informed.



WELFARE and SOCIAL NEWS – *Gordon Banks*

Welfare. We are slowly getting back to normal! During lock down each Committee member did an excellent job keeping an eye on a selection of members. Now we are back to relative 'normality', I would be really grateful if all of you would find time to update me as when there are welfare matters that would benefit from being shared – **by the 25th of each month if possible.**

- **Brian Garton** is improving slowly, but Sid continues to have difficulty finding carers.

- **Peter Nation** is mobile in a wheelchair and has been able to go to Salisbury Market recently. But he feels unable to attend Probus meetings for the rest of this year.

... some thoughts for troubled times:

What's it all about?

When we are born, we cannot focus our eyes or control our limbs. We do not understand what we are hearing and seeing - what a shock! From being in the dark at a constant temperature with our heart at rest, we leave that secure environment for ever.

Now we have to breathe and try to understand what it is all about.

Why are we male or female? Healthy - or not? Born into a happy home - or not? Provided with wholesome food - or not? Have adequate clothes and shelter - or not? We are the top of creation. And yet so vulnerable.

We slowly learn to move about and learn to walk. It takes time for us to understand people talking to us, and longer for us to say things that are understood. We meet other children as we grow up. We go to school, which some enjoy, but what if we have a disability?

The teenage years can be trying. What should we do as an adult? Some know what they want to do and go on to achieve success. Others have no strong desires in any direction. It would be good if whatever we wanted to achieve came to fruition. But we know that is not what usually happens.

We may marry and settle down and have children. And so, the whole process starts all over again.

We grow older and retire. Our body loses some of its strength and facilities. Lastly the body dies. After all, we only had it on loan. There are several thousand million humans alive on earth currently. There are several million species of creatures as well as us. An oak tree may live for hundreds of years, but a bee may live for just a few weeks. A slow worm goes about its business quietly and undercover. From minnows to whales, the sea and lakes and rivers support a wide variety of life. Above us the various birds play their part. Wild and farmed animals and pets are busy each day.

It's like a huge play taking place. But - we humans have one quality that the other species do not have - the power of discrimination. And so, we are free to decide how we respond to life's challenges - and in which direction to proceed.

We take no material things with us. Where do we go? What is it that goes? Who decides? It would be nice to think that we go to heaven for ever. Is there a system that makes this happen?

How can we find out? Does the mind carry on with its job? Do we have a soul? Could it be that the mind/soul gets a new body? That would explain why some people are talented in an area that their parents are not.

Can we take out insurance, so that if "we" come back we have a happy life? Or if we do not come back, we go to a happy place?

Is there something to be learned from the present world-wide virus?

Lots of Questions - maybe we need to go beyond the mind to find the answers. Meanwhile we can carry on being good human beings.

Gordon Banks



Report on a Talk by Sam Woodcock — Alan Jeffs

There was a happy gathering at the Rugby Club on 10th August, when – at long last – members were allowed to meet again after the relaxation of Covid restrictions. Probus Club member and stalwart local historian Sam Woodcock gave a talk on the history of St Simon & St Jude's Church, and its associated school at Milton-On-Stour. Thank you, Sam, for stepping in at short notice and giving this interesting talk, a precis of which follows.

The History of Milton-On-Stour Church and School

The Church of St Simon and St Jude.

The village of Milton-on-Stour lies just outside the environs of Gillingham town, some distance from the town parish church of St Mary the Virgin.

The lack of a permanent church building in Milton to serve the needs of the local community had long been recognised. The Rev Henry Deane, the long-standing incumbent of Gillingham for many years in the 19th Century, had redesigned and restored Gillingham Parish church, and now turned his attention to the need to build a church in Milton.



St Mary The Virgin
Gillingham



St Simon and St Jude
Milton-on-Stour

In 1865, The Rev Deane approached Mr Thomas Matthews of Milton Lodge, who agreed to donate some land and money to enable a church to be built. Thomas Matthews died before the foundation stone was laid (by his daughter).

Over half the cost was borne by the Matthews family, and the balance was paid by public subscription.

In 1867 the church was opened by the Bishop of Salisbury (with final fitting out at a later date). The spire was added later in 1892, with the church clock added in the early years of the new century. A parsonage was provided by altering two back-to-back cottages.

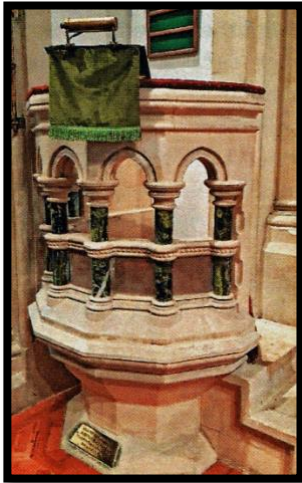
Initially the church pews were of pitch pine, but the majority of these were replaced with carved pews, with a different design on each. These carved pews remained after a 2017 restoration of the church, with other plain pews at the back of the church removed to create a

community space.

Originally the church had painted wall murals, but these were painted over in the 1930's. On the other hand, the quality and preponderance of high-quality stained-glass windows remains a notable feature of the church.

Other additions and alterations.

1887. A new window depicting the raising of Lazarus and known as 'the Matthews window' was installed. Also, a new pulpit which has a notable pedigree. It was designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield and is a replica of one commissioned by the then Prince of Wales for the Royal



Memorial Church of St George's in Cannes, South of France in honour of The Duke of Albany, the son of Queen Victoria, who died in Cannes in 1884.

1891. A new organ was installed, replacing one originally installed by the Rev Henry Deane.

1908. The church clock was installed in the tower and remains one of the few hand-wound clocks in the country.



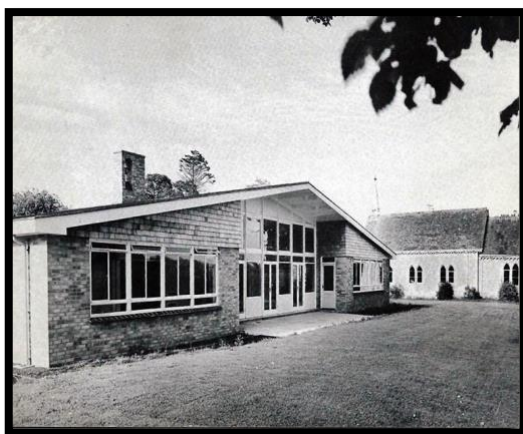
1988. The lych-gate was built in memory of Mrs Ina Matthews. The picture on the right shows Mr and Mrs Franey Matthews and family.



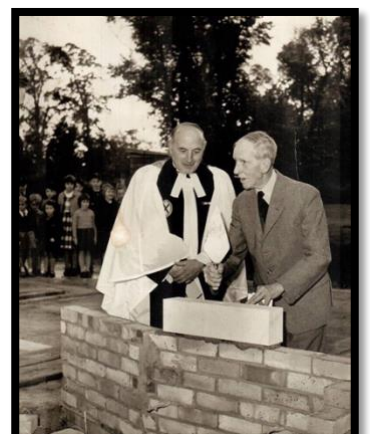
2017. By 2017 a major restoration of the church was needed to address the deterioration of the fabric and serious subsidence. This was undertaken with support from the Heritage Lottery and other grants. Apart from structural refurbishment this included other improvements such as laying a completely new floor including under-floor heating, new lighting to show off the fine roof timbers, and the installation of toilet facilities. Sam explained that as part of the bid to attract Lottery Fund money, local research into the stained-glass windows had revealed that these were by [Clayton & Bell](#), producers of high-quality work in the latter half of the 19th century. Sam went on to say that this was a major factor in securing the Lottery grant, and that Alfred Bell, one of the partners in the firm was a Dorset man.

Milton on Stour CofE Primary School

Sam also gave a brief history of the local Primary School. The original building (now demolished) is shown in the left-hand picture behind the new schoolhouse.



The picture on the right shows the laying of the foundation stone for the new school in about 1964, by The Venerable E.L. Seager & Mr. George Blandford Matthews. George was the son of Thomas Matthews who had provided a large sum of money for building the original church.

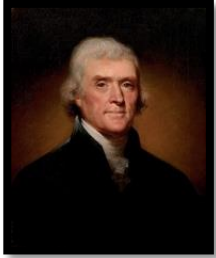


Sam's presentation included many photographs of school pupils at Milton - including a young Sam Woodcock! – and of events at both the school and the church. To this day, the school maintains very [close links](#) with the church.



Endpiece for Today - *Editor*

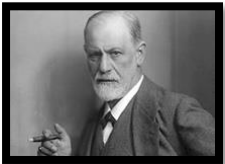
On Happiness and Pleasure



Thomas Jefferson, **The US Declaration of Independence.**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness”

Note that it did not promise happiness as an *unalienable right* – only its pursuit.



Freud said the only true pleasure in life comes from fulfilling in adulthood the desires one wasn't able to satisfy as a child.

His was to eat ice cream on the slopes of Vesuvius.