



PROBUS RECORDER

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

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – *Roger Ellis*

“I blame Ronald McDonald”

I was at Bishops Lydeard Station recently and opened up the Car Park to allow customers in before travelling on the trains. There is a small area close to the gates and on the grass were a number of wrappers and associated articles from a fast-food chain some of you may know. I make no comment on the intelligence of those who buy such items and seem to feel it satisfactory to just throw the associated residue out of their car windows. But it made me think.

When my Great Western train used to arrive in Paddington the cleaners would board and, on average, remove two black plastic sacks full of rubbish from each coach. Several years ago in Basel, Switzerland, I watched a ten-coach train terminate, and the cleaners filled two black plastic sacks from the whole train. The mind-set in that Country and others in Europe seems to be completely different to ours.

Like one of the characters from Winnie the Poo, I only have a small brain and I cannot get my head round why people would want to do this to our lovely countryside. Come the revolution they will all be lined up against my famous brick wall - together with caravan owners! Bound to upset some of my fellow Probus members.

Now for something completely different. On holiday in Switzerland, I had a meal with a friend who works for Swiss Federal Railways and lives in a hamlet near Interlaken. The photo below is the view from his back garden to which I could only mutter “Wow”. He sees it every day and is used to it, but to me it looked brilliant.



WELFARE and SOCIAL NEWS – Gordon Banks

Welfare. What a warm autumn we seem to be having. Even so, now that we are into cooler weather, some members appear to remain concerned that facemasks are not mandatory at meetings.

- **Brian Garton** remains in his care home and finding a bit more restful. However, his wife Sid remains unable to find home careers as yet, and so Brian is unable to return home.
- **Peter Nation** remains mobile in his wheelchair.
- **Dave Hooker**'s wife Pam is OK again after feeling unwell at the recent Probus lunch in the Udder Farm Shop.
- **Roy Stone** has declared that he feels he can only attend meetings when masks return to being mandatory.
- **Ken Stedman** is having to live with his legs in bandages and as a result he is not driving for the moment.
- **... onward – ever onward**

A man boasts to his friend about his new hearing aid.

"It's the most expensive one I've had, it cost £2000".

His friend asks what kind it is. The braggart says "*half past four*".

An Englishman, a Scotsman and an Irishman all enter a 26-mile-long swimming race.

After 12 miles the Scottish man gets tired and drops out.

After 16 miles the Englishman drops out too.

After 25 miles the Irishman decides that he cannot finish the race, so he turns around and swims back to the start!



Request for Help

Gillingham Car Link needs volunteer drivers

Gillingham Car Link is currently running a campaign to recruit new volunteer drivers. Demand for our service continues to grow and we desperately need more drivers to be able to help our community. Might you be interested? Do you enjoy driving, meeting and helping people?

Gillingham Car Link drivers use their own cars to take people in the SP8 area who have no transport to hospital and other medical appointments.

Drivers receive 45p a mile expenses. You decide which journeys you undertake, and you can limit your availability to only a few sessions a week.

If you live in or near the **SP8** area, are under 80, have a car, and enjoy meeting people, please contact Philip on 01747 824645 or email walkerphilsu@gmail.com. We have more detailed information available.



Reports on our October Talks

Protecting Royals and VIPs - Allan Peters

Mr Allan Peters is a former policeman who served in the Royal Protection Branch of the Metropolitan Police. He was a personal protection officer to H.R.H Prince Charles from 1981 to 1989.

Allan explained that the kidnap attempt in 1984 on Princess Anne had led to a review of arrangements for protection of members of the Royal Family; this resulted in the formation of the armed specialist police unit in 1978. As a young 27 years-old police sergeant he answered the advertisement asking for volunteers to join the new unit; he was one of some 500 officers who applied.

A rigorous selection and training programme at Hereford whittled the numbers down; Allan was one of the few who were selected to serve as a Royal Protection officer, joining initially as a back-up officer. Vehicles used at that time were Rover V8s; in addition to the usual radio communications these were equipped with direct radio communication to the Palace.

One duty undertaken was to act as a back-up officer for H.R.H Prince Charles on his hunting trips (who was fitted out with a tracking device and could call up for emergency assistance when necessary)

Duties subsequently undertaken included acting as a member of H.R.H Princess Anne's support team, accompanying her on a number of trips.

One occasion with Prince Charles was a trip by helicopter from Broadlands (the residence of Earl Mountbatten) to a dinner on board HMS Victory with senior naval officers. Allan was invited to join them for the meal and recalled his embarrassment (he is a very tall man) when he stood up for the royal toast, banging his head in the process, much to the amusement of those present (the Navy does **not** stand up for the toast when on board ship!).

Work included protection officer duties with H.R.H Diana, Princess of Wales after her marriage. Allan was in charge of the protection arrangements when she secretly entered St Mary's hospital for the birth of Prince William (avoiding the media) and accompanied her at many other events.



Allan acted for a short period with a young Prince Andrew and was also present at Sarah Ferguson's 'Hen Night' with Princess Diana at the Duke of Westminster's flat in Belgravia when – with Pamela Stephenson – the girls dressed up as WPC's with wigs and short skirts before moving off to Annabel's night club.

The talk was peppered with amusing stories about the experiences of a Royal Protection Officer (many not recorded here!).

Alan Poulter gave the vote of thanks.

Sir Merton Russell-Cotes and his contribution to Bournemouth

- *Talk by David Beardsley*

David began by explaining that he is a trustee of the Russell-Cotes House, Museum and Art Gallery in Bournemouth, and a tour guide there. His talk aimed to promote interest in Russell-Cotes, his life and his contribution to the development of Bournemouth and all its attractions.

The town motto is '*Beauty and Good Health*'.

Sir Merton Russell-Cotes bought and improved the Bath Hotel in 1876 and later built his own house, East Cliff Hall in 1901 which became the Museum and Art Gallery, now owned by the people of Bournemouth.

Russell-Cotes (or Cotes as he was then named) was born near Wolverhampton in 1835, the son of a metal worker. When his father died, he did not inherit the business and so moved to Glasgow, where he initially trained as, but did not become, a doctor. He worked in a hotel and set up a vintner business. He was a restless and opportunist character travelling to Argentina to seek his fortune. This gave him a taste for world travel. He returned to Glasgow and eventually met and married Annie in 1860, the daughter of a cotton magnate, who at one time had lived in Bournemouth.

Russell-Cotes was a typical Victorian entrepreneur, working in the wool industries of Manchester and moving to Dublin to sell life insurance. There he made his money. By 1876 the family had five children, but having a chest complaint, he was advised to seek warmer climes. Thus, Bournemouth seemed the right location.

At some point Cotes added 'Russell' to his name, believing he was related to Lord Russell, in order to give himself some status.

The family stayed at the Bath Hotel, which he bought and renamed **The Royal Bath Hotel** because the Prince of Wales had stayed there in 1856, whilst building a house for his then mistress, Lily Langtry. He revamped and enlarged the Hotel which does well as Bournemouth begins to grow and develop into a 'spa resort' based on its seaside location and fine air (rather than the mineral springs of resorts like Bath and Buxton).

His friendship with the actor Sir Henry Irving drew in other personalities such as Oscar Wilde, Bournemouth being a good place to escape the rumour mills of London! The concert hall of nearby Boscombe was an attraction. Queen [Eugénie](#) of France visited after her husband [Napoleon III](#) was deposed, accompanied by the Queen of Sweden. He bought some of her furniture, now exhibited in the museum.

Russell-Cotes' reputation grew. He was elected to the Board of Commissioners in 1883 and sought to develop the town as a health resort. He was instrumental in extending the railway into the town - the station being placed near to the Hotel. He oversaw the construction of the



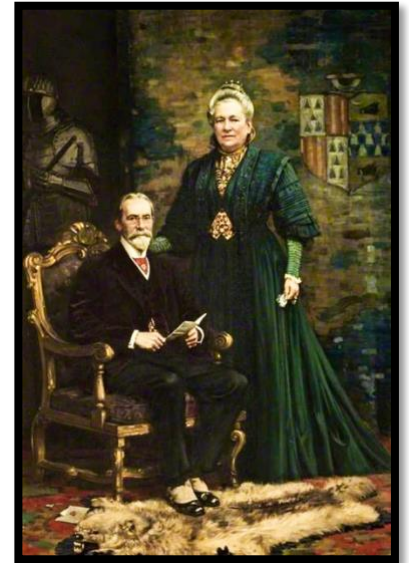
'Undercliff Drive' which provided a promenade along the sea front, a major construction at the time. The pier was built, but other projects such as an isolation hospital did not meet with local approval. His house, East Cliff Hall, was built adjoining the Hotel in an 'Italianate' style.

Perhaps to escape the politics of the town, he and his wife travelled the world, especially Japan, Australia and New Zealand, bringing back many artifacts and curios. (The Japanese items now form a small museum within the house - The Mikado Room.)

Back in Bournemouth, his wife Annie became involved in local societies and charities. He became Mayor in 1894 and by now had amassed an art collection. He had been influenced by his father-in-law's art collection. However, he bought art works as a dealer rather than as an art connoisseur, buying out-of-favour pieces at knock-down prices and trading them. He was, after all, a 'commercial' man without any aristocratic pretensions.

He was granted the freedom of the town in 1909 and Knighted in the same year by Edward VII - the very Prince of Wales he had named the Hotel after.

He had always planned to donate his possessions to the town, which happened after his death in 1921. His house, East Cliff Hall, became [The Russell-Cotes Museum and Art Gallery](#). Well worth a visit!



Sir Merton and Lady
Annie Russell-Cotes



We owned a Museum – Mike Robinson

What did you say you've bought? A museum? Where? Zennor? Where's that? In Cornwall?

That was the kind of response from friends and family when in 1992 Liz and I decided to get out of the rat race and work for ourselves. We had spent the previous 18 years renovating a 450-year-old house in Alton, Hampshire, once the home of the poet, Edmund Spenser, who wrote "The Fairie Queen", and felt we needed a new challenge.

The **Wayside Museum**, in the tiny (under 200 souls) parish of Zennor is between St. Ives and Land's End, on the lonely but dramatically scenic coast road.

The Museum was housed in and around the miller's cottage dating back to the 1500's, and the mill itself built in the early 1700's. The collection was started in the early 1930's by a Col. Hirst and the West Cornwall Field Club, whilst the Museum was founded at its permanent location in 1938, at the home of his friends, William and Constance Lloyd, parents of George, a prolific but now sadly ignored composer. In the early 1950's a local schoolteacher took over the property and exhibits, but it wasn't until 1984 that another couple enlarged it, built many exhibit rooms and turned it into a commercial business.

One of the main reasons we decided to take it on was that it also included a Cornish craft and book shop, so that having both been departmental managers, we could each have our own areas of responsibility. One of my first jobs was to clear the exterior areas of 8-foot-high brambles, to reveal a river and to create garden walks between the exhibition rooms. Also, whilst the rooms were packed with items, little was labelled. This involved lots of



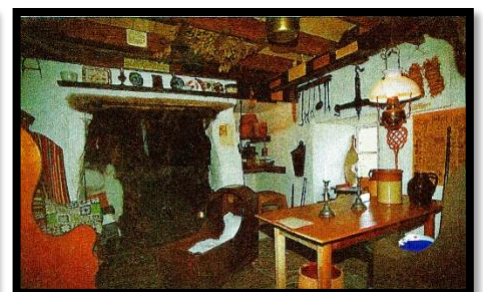
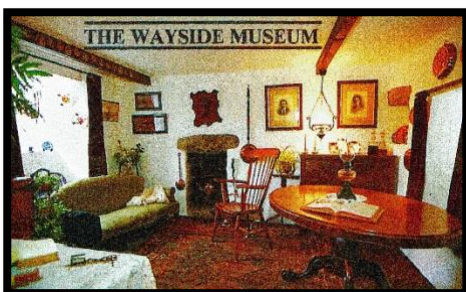
research and talks with locals so that we could acknowledge who had donated what and have a picture and article about them, if possible. New items were always being donated so that by the time we left we had well over 5000 artefacts in 16 display areas, plus many outdoor exhibits.

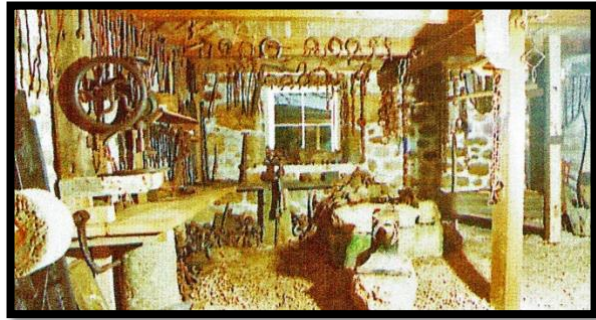
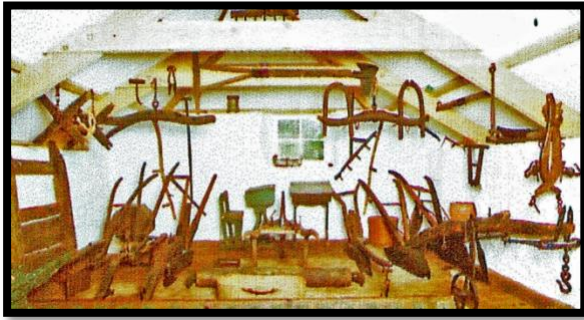
The exhibitions included a **Cobbler's Shop**, a **Wheelwright's workshop**, a **two floor Grist Mill**, a **Blacksmith's smithy**, **Archaeological finds**, **Farming and Agricultural Equipment**, as well the **History and People of Zennor**. The last included stories of famous and infamous residents including: D.H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Sir Arthur Munnings, Haile Selassie (the last emperor of Ethiopia), Arthur Foster (first secretary of the League of Nations), and [Aleister Crowley](#), the pagan prophet famed for his Black Magic activities. Not bad for such a small village.

Other exhibitions included Mining and Domestic Life. In 1997, to celebrate the museum's 60th birthday, we rebuilt the old piggery and added displays on 'The Sea', 'Childhood Memories', and the 'Village Dairy and School'. I also introduced, long before the N.T. and other similar places, a children's Quiz Trail, with a signed certificate on completion. Visitors could also look round part of the Miller's Cottage (we lived in the other part) and view the old kitchen and parlour. In the floor was a Bronze Age socket stone that once held the base of the central pole of a hut, showing how long people had lived on the site. In the grounds were further exhibits, including three working water wheels, querns and mullers over 2000 years old and rail tracks and wagons from local tin mines.

We would receive thousands of visitors each year as despite the isolation of Zennor people came to admire the wild scenery and to see the famous Mermaid's pew in the church. What fascinated visitors most was that they could remember their parents or grandparents using the majority of the items on display and see photos and stories of those who had used them and more importantly, they could handle a lot of them. Consequently, we could remind them that *"There is something elemental about re-encountering the things you once used or saw your grandparents using. The pace of change in all areas of society during the past century has been more dramatic than anything that went before. Through the artefacts of our ancestors, we can still touch the hem of the garments which clothed their daily lives. When you feel the worn smoothness of the butter churn's handle or touch the gloss of the rake's much-used grip you are in a lateral sense, in contact with the past. You cannot separate these things from those who used them and whose hands made them worn in working."*

We had the Museum for 10 years before I decided to retire. Being open 7 days a week for 7 months of the year was hard work, but a very rewarding way of spending the last years of my working life





Endpiece for Today - Editor

On Bigotry and Doubt

- Protestants and Catholics united in their hatred of ecumenicism.
N Irish newspaper headline
- “I am a man of no convictions, or at least I think I am.”
The Philanthropist (1970)
Christopher Hampton
- Said the Frenchwoman sitting next to Charles Moore: “We are not anti-Semitic. It is all lies. The newspapers only say this because they are controlled by Jews.”
Charles Moore - past Editor of The Daily Telegraph.