



# 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 Lester*

I have never been Chairman of anything, and I never really expected to be. But it is a privilege to have been voted in as Chairman of the Probus Club of Gillingham. I have an outstanding act to follow, Roger Ellis, and will do my best to follow in his footsteps (but perhaps not his taste in shoes!). Luckily, I have a very good Committee to assist me through my year in office and I would particularly like to thank Colin Chamberlain who has agreed to be my Vice Chairman as well as keeping his role of Secretary. Phil Butler will be missed from his job as Treasurer after many years of dedicated service, thank you Phil. A big welcome to Kenneth Wilson who has now taken on the role from Phil as our Treasurer.

Life after Covid is, hopefully, getting back to the 'normal' trend. At least we are holding our fortnightly meetings again without the need for compulsory mask wearing. It makes recognising fellow members much easier, although names are sometimes harder to remember - please wear your badges!

There are outings and lunches being organised and if anyone has a suggestion, please let me know. As I said at the AGM, I have booked the Grange at Osborne, near Sherborne, for our Christmas Dinner on Tuesday the 13th of December, a date for your diary. We held our dinner there some three years ago and it was a great success. Some members stayed overnight as it is a Best Western Hotel and gave it the thumbs up.

We had a skittles outing at the Royal British Legion on Thursday - the 11th organised by Peter Grange. A good social evening was had by all who attended. Guess who came Last!!!

I look forward to an interesting year as your Chairman and wish you all Good Health for the future.



## WELFARE & SOCIAL

### Welfare Report – *Roger Ellis*

I was not intending to be the Welfare Officer for the Probus Club of Gillingham, so as they used to say on the Fast Show in a Birmingham accent “*you ain't seen me*”.

Colin Chamberlain was kind enough to send me a list of those members who have not been to meetings recently and I tried to ring them all to ask how they were, and the following information was gleaned.

- Graham Strood has not been with us due to a clash of days when he has to be elsewhere but has renewed his 2022 subscription.
- Tony Harris is fine physically, but like many of us memory is sometimes a problem.
- Terry Wiles wants to remain a member of our Club, but I would not expect to see him before the autumn.
- Angela Stone was a delight to talk to and I passed on our good wishes to Roy. Covid has meant a lack of personal contact and Roy, as with other members, has found the past two plus years difficult. I will keep you informed.

## In Memoriam

**Mary Sewell.** Mary had been Horace Erridge's close friend for many decades, and Alan Poulter and I, the Hookers and the McLellans were at her funeral today to support Horace. I talked to Mary's goddaughter on the walk from the Church and had noticed that she was visibly moved during the service. That was not surprising - except that they had not seen one another for over twenty years and had only exchanged Christmas and Birthday cards. I gather Mary was not happy with her goddaughter's choice of lifestyle.



It should not be like that but often is, so when you are not busy go onto YouTube and listen to the song "[The Living Years](#)" by **Mike and the Mechanics**. The words could be relevant.

*Preaching over! Roger Ellis*

## Robin Richardson

We were all saddened to learn of the recent passing of Robin Richardson. Robin was an Honorary Member of our Probus Club.



During his time with us he held various offices. He was social secretary for five consecutive years from 1993 to 1997. He was then Vice Chairman from 1997/98. He then became Chairman from 1998 until 1999. (*Robin is seen here at the time of his farewell in 2019 sitting dressed in the dark top.*)

Robin, with his late wife Mary, took an active part in all aspects of Probus life, attending most social occasions and outings. After Mary's death, Robin continued to support Probus events despite in recent years suffering from increased immobility. He was never one to complain and had a cheerful smile come what may. He was every inch a gentleman!

I came to know him a little better in more recent times. A few of us would lunch regularly at the Bell and Crown in Zeals. We did this on alternative Tuesdays when there was no Probus lunch meeting. He used to make us all smile as he read the menu, for each dish would be accompanied with either a side salad or salad garnishing. He would say "No weeds – I don't like weeds!" This became a regular occurrence, to the extent that it almost became his catch phrase!

His cremation will take place in the Sheffield area, but at some time in the future there will be a memorial service with the interment of his ashes at St. Nicholas Church Silton, which I'm sure many of us would wish to attend.

*Sam Woodcock*



## REPORTS ON OUR APRIL TALKS

### Artificial Intelligence (AI)

*Peter Grange – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022*

Following the Club’s AGM, our Webmaster Peter Grange, took us through the development and use of AI over the last few decades, starting with a brief resumé of earlier progress, when computers were essentially programmed to carry out specific tasks, with humans controlling this process.

The definition of AI had been summed up by Alan Turing (of Bletchley Park fame) at a public lecture in London in 1947 saying “*What we want is a machine that can learn from experience*” and that the “*possibility of letting the machine alter its own instructions provides the mechanism for this.*”

In AI’s basic form, computers are programmed to ‘mimic’ human behaviour using extensive data from past examples of similar behaviour in order to enable them to undertake problem solving. The vast increase in computer capacity has enabled the use of neural networks, where huge amounts of data can be processed to produce outputs. Different algorithms are used to understand the relationships in a given set of data in order to produce the best results from the changing inputs. Essentially, the computers are trained in such a manner that they can adapt according to changing input.



Geoffrey Hinton, a British-Canadian psychologist and computer scientist, is most noted for his work on artificial neural networks, inspired by the way a human brain works, with a collection of connected units. Each connection can transmit a signal to other neurons.

There are many uses for neural networks, including their use changing business processes and in everyday life. Examples given by Peter Grange in his presentation included such things as

- Google Translate (a service to translate from one language to another).
- Google Photos (for backing up photos and videos so that they can be accessed by different devices).
- Self-driving cars and other vehicles (combining a variety of sensors to make the vehicles capable of sensing the environment to move safely with little or no human input);
- And many uses in healthcare including their use to predict illnesses.
- Face and number recognition.
- Gaming.

Despite all these advances in the use of AI, Peter gave examples of what can go wrong. The challenges are many, and looking into the future, the increased use of AI in automation processes in the working environment, could well mean the loss of many current jobs. Peter’s summing up left the view that AI in its current form is not yet truly creative, but there is still massive potential for its advance.

This was a stimulating talk and following questions our new Chairman Roger Lester gave the vote of thanks.

*Report: Alan Jeffs*

## The “Right” Light at Night

*Steve Tonkin FRAS 17 May*

Steve Tonkin lives in Fordingbridge; having taught for many years, he is now the ‘*Dark Sky Advisor*’ for Cranborne Chase.

Before his present role as Dark Sky Advisor, Steve Tonkin taught physics, maths and astronomy, but retired five years ago to concentrate on his love of astronomy and outreach activities. He writes regularly on the subject and is passionate about the problem of light pollution and its negative effects, and to promote measures to remedy these problems.

The Chase is a nationally designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), covering 380 square miles of countryside, overlapping the boundaries of Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset. The Cranborne Landscape Trust works to promote the importance and awareness of Cranborne Chase. In addition to its importance in terms of archaeological and historic significance, and its rare chalklands and biodiversity, Cranborne Chase became the first AONB in the country to be designated in its entirety as an *International Dark Sky Reserve* in 2019.

At its core (surrounded by a buffer zone), the absence of light pollution enables the night sky, with its myriads of stars to be viewed in all its glory. There are 17 such reserves in the world, of which 7 are in the UK. Cranborne Chase liaises with seven planning authorities, with the specific aim of ensuring that the need to minimise light pollution is taken into account in the planning process.

Steve explained that light pollution is the inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light which can have serious environmental consequences for humans, wildlife, and our climate and whose components are:

- **Glare** - excessive brightness that causes visual discomfort.
- **Skyglow** - brightening of the night sky over inhabited areas.
- **Light Trespass** - light falling where it is not intended or needed.
- **Clutter** - bright, confusing and excessive groupings of light sources.



In his talk, Steve Tonkin explained how much energy is wasted by misdirected light glare and light intrusion; about 35% of lighting worldwide is wasted light, and 21 million tons of carbon dioxide is estimated to be wasted each year. The photograph shows the effects of a massive power outage in the NE of the North American continent that affected 55 million people in 2003.

Steve went on to report that there is a growing body of evidence that links the brightening night sky directly to measurable negative impacts apart from the obvious one of increasing energy consumption, and he went on to give examples of how light pollution affects such things as:

### The Ecosystem & Wildlife

Birds are attracted to light; breeding patterns are altered, and it has also been seen

as contributing to a reduction in songbirds.

Trees lose their leaves later in the season and bud earlier.

There has been a drastic reduction in insect numbers, inevitably adversely affecting the food chain.

### Humans.

Humans evolved to the rhythms of the natural light-dark cycle of day and night. The spread of artificial lighting means most of us no longer experience truly dark nights.

Research suggests that artificial light at night can negatively affect human health, increasing risks for obesity, depression, sleep disorders, diabetes, breast cancer and more.

In his illustrated talk, Steve Tonkin showed how many of the problems of light pollution can be reversed or eliminated:

- Better awareness.
- Only using artificial lighting where it is needed.
- The use of motion detector lights and timers.
- Proper shielding and direction of outdoor lights.
- Keeping lighting inside buildings where they are needed.

All these are ways to help. Cranborne Chase Trust issue fact sheets and good practice notes about dark sky compliant lighting units, using the philosophy of the [International Dark-Sky Association \(IDA\)](#) based in the USA.

Steve's interesting and informative talk highlighted the negative effects of light pollution, and simple actions that can be taken to improve matters. Following questions, the Chairman gave the vote of thanks.

*Report: Alan Jeffs*



## **ENDPIECE – Editor**

The following are answers provided by US P6 children (Age 9/10) during a history test.

1. Ancient Egypt was inhabited by mummies and they all wrote in hydraulics. They lived in the Sarah Dessert. The climate of the Sarah is such that all the inhabitants have to live elsewhere.
2. Moses led the Hebrew slaves to the Red Sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread made without any ingredients. Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the Ten Commandments. He died before he ever reached Canada.
3. Solomon had three hundred wives and seven hundred porcupines.
4. The Greeks were a highly sculptured people, and without them we wouldn't have history. The Greeks also had myths. A myth is a female moth.

5. Socrates was a famous Greek teacher who went around giving people advice. They killed him. Socrates died from an overdose of wedlock. After his death, his career suffered a dramatic decline.
6. In the Olympic Games, Greeks ran races, jumped, hurled biscuits, and threw the java.
7. Julius Caesar extinguished himself on the battlefields of Gaul. The Ides of March murdered him because they thought he was going to be made king. Dying, he gasped out: "Tee hee, Brutus."
8. Joan of Arc was burnt to a steak and was canonized by Bernard Shaw.
9. Queen Elizabeth was the "Virgin Queen". As a queen she was a success. When she exposed herself before her troops they all shouted "hurrah."
10. It was an age of great inventions and discoveries. Gutenberg invented removable type and the Bible. Another important invention was the circulation of blood. Sir Walter Raleigh is a historical figure because he invented cigarettes and started smoking. Sir Francis Drake circumcised the world with a 100-foot clipper.
11. The greatest writer of the Renaissance was William Shakespeare. He was born in the year 1564, supposedly on his birthday. He never made much money and is famous only because of his plays. He wrote tragedies, comedies, and hysterectomies, all in Islamic pentameter. Romeo and Juliet are an example of a heroic couple. Romeo's last wish was to be laid by Juliet.
12. Writing at the same time as Shakespeare was Miguel Cervantes. He wrote Donkey Hote. The next great author was John Milton. Milton wrote paradise Lost. Then his wife died and he wrote Paradise Regained.
13. Delegates from the original 13 states formed the Contented Congress. Thomas Jefferson, a Virgin, and Benjamin Franklin were two singers of the Declaration of Independence. Franidin discovered electricity by rubbing two cats backward and declared, "A horse divided against itself cannot stand." Franidin died in 1790 and is still dead.
14. Abraham Lincoln became America's greatest Precedent. Lincoln's mother died in infancy, and he was born in a log cabin which he built with his own hands. Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves by signing the Emasculation Proclamation. On the night of April 14, 1865, Lincoln went to the theater and got shot in his seat by one of the actors in a moving picture show. They believe the assassinator was John Wilkes Booth, a supposingly insane actor. This ruined Booth's career.
15. Johann Bach wrote a great many musical compositions and had a large number of children. In between he practiced on an old spinster which he kept up in his attic. Bach died from 1750 to the present. Bach was the most famous composer in the world and so was Handel. Handel was half German, half Italian, and half English. He was very large.
16. Beethoven wrote music even though he was deaf. He was so deaf he wrote loud music. He took long walks in the forest even when everyone was calling for him. Beethoven expired in 1827 and later died for this.
17. The nineteenth century was a time of a great many thoughts and inventions. People stopped reproducing by hand and started reproducing by machine. The invention of the steamboat caused a network of rivers to spring up. Cyrus McConnick invented the McCormick raper, which did the work of a hundred men. Louis Pasteur discovered a cure for rabbits.
18. Charles Darwin was a naturalist who wrote the Organ of the Species.
19. Madman Curie discovered the radio. And Karl Marx became one of the Marx Brothers.