

Probus Early Summer Holiday 2014
Hotel Eden – Rovinj – Croatia, 17th June to 24th June 2014

Estimated cost £720 per person (single person in single room, £839). This is on a half-board basis in a standard twin room *en suite* with balcony, coach transfers and 20kg luggage per person (hold) : Full details are in Thomsons brochure on Italy, Malta & Croatia.

Flight Times: 17th June (out): B'ham 0815 – Pula 1135
 24th June (return): Pula 1235 – B'ham 1400

The board will be available for bookings at our meeting on 23rd May. A deposit of £200 per person to be paid at that time (cheques to SPPC). Please put full names as per passports on back of cheque. Payment by credit card re. insurance purposes to be made to Four Oaks Travel by Saturday 25 May.

I will reserve a number of places for this visit with FOT/Thomsons and I would thus appreciate notification by email or telephone if you are interested in joining the holiday. Thomsons will only hold the reservation for one week which explains the urgency re. numbers.

I will inform interested members of the exact, fixed price of holiday at our meeting on 23rd May and hope at that time I can have your firm commitments. All bookings will need to be confirmed by Tuesday 28th May.

Brian Mallett

MAKING YOUR APOLOGIES

If you are unable to attend a General Meeting please advise **Graham Jones** by the **Sunday** before that General Meeting.

If you are unable to carry out the Vote of Thanks or the Newsletter Report please get in touch with **Peter Weston**, **well before** that General Meeting.

If you are unable to carry out your duties on the Kitchen Rota then please try and 'swap' with someone from the following month, advising **Graham Jones** of the change.

Editor's Notes

Well, here it is. It was a bit tricky at times, especially since I was away at the Beaulieu autojumble in the New Forest on the weekend immediately before our meeting, which is the critical time to put the Newsletter together. Hopefully it will get easier!

Please let me have reports, news items (and pictures) for the current month as early as possible and certainly no later than the **Saturday before** the monthly General Meeting. While I understand that not all members use computers, please use email wherever possible. Ideally, articles should be approximately 300 words. While I may sometimes need to make minor editorial amendments I will always discuss any significant changes with the author.

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Committee. This Newsletter appears on the club website and our Publicity Officer (Phillip Troman) may also use it as the basis of material submitted to the local press. - Peter Weston

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Sutton Park Probus
Club Newsletter
 (Founded 1998)

President: Rod Crowley

No.175

May 2013

'My First AGM' by Peter Weston



The main committee for 2013-14, (left to right)

Harry Medcalf, Social Secretary; Rod Crowley, President; Brian Spencer, Past President; John Fellows, Vice-President; Fred Ditchfield, Hon. Secretary; Brian Harbourne, Hon. Treasurer.

This was my first Probus AGM and I was curious to see how it would turn out. Retiring President Brian began by saying that 48 members were present, representing 83% attendance, which I thought was pretty good for an AGM because they can sometimes be deadly boring. On the other hand I've known them turn into shouting matches as various indignant members express outrage at some petty slight. In the event it was neither boring nor rowdy and Brian conducted matters with impeccable calmness and good humour.

Only at one point did I think his smooth flow might be derailed, when he said that the proposed names for the new committee posts were unopposed, and did anyone feel the need for a ballot? Hopefully, I turned in my seat to see if some trouble-maker would dare to stick their hand in the air. Then what, I wondered? Would the ever-ready Fred Ditchfield whip out a set of ballot forms he'd prepared the night before, just in case?

Would the candidates solemnly troop out of the room and return to be elected in best Eastern-bloc style with 98.5% of the popular vote? Perhaps fortunately it didn't happen and Brian was able to conclude without interruption, thanking club officers for their work in the year just ended, which provoked vigorous applause as he named them, one by one, with a special mention for Tony Ferneyhough for his work on the *Newsletter*, curse him. He'll be a hard act to follow.

New President Rod took the podium and read out three inspirational quotations by famous men such as Abraham Lincoln and the creator of the Muppets. He was a bit too fast for me to note his exact words but the general message seemed to be along the lines of 'sit back and relax, this won't hurt a bit' – or was that an incantation from a previous existence?

Next our new V.P., the amiable John Fellows, came on and made a few modest remarks. John confided to me afterwards that he'd never done anything like this before apart from addressing his workforce and telling them that they couldn't have a pay rise. After that, chairing the club should be a piece of cake!

Then outgoing Treasurer Dennis Rose returned to the floor to present the budget for the coming year. I'm still a bit in awe of Dennis (it's those eyebrows) but nonetheless risked asking a question. It seemed to me that by assuming an increase in subscriptions (through increased numbers) we should also expect to see a small amount in joining fees. He put me right with words to the effect that we didn't *know* if we'd get any new members, so it was prudent not to budget for them. He's right, of course; this is a very conservative budget compared to the slightly more creative accountancy I'm used to in Rotary circles. And I'm quite sure the vastly-experienced Brian Harbourne will keep it so.

On we rolled. Rod talked about membership, and once again I was impressed at our success in having brought in six new recruits in the year (of which I'm one, of course), something which most clubs can only dream about. He said that three existing members may possibly not renew so the club's target was to find another five newcomers in the coming term. Quite a challenge!

Rod also made the excellent point that with an age-span of more than twenty years within the membership it was important to maintain cohesion. However, as one of the new boys I can assure him that I've found Sutton Park to be an extremely well-integrated club with no danger of any splinter-groups developing.

Not much else to report; Fred Ditchfield returned to blind us with science, Harry Medcalf seamlessly assumed David Rooke's mantle (though he's had a few months practice), and he concluded with an announcement of next year's Early Summer Break in Croatia. Put me down for two places!

- Peter Weston

(Committee photo by Tony Ferneyhough)

This month' Brain-teaser: Name that town (or city)!

Here are eight cryptic clues, each of which will lead you to the name of a UK town or city. For instance, 'automotive back-axle' will give you the answer 'Car-diff':

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Tumbler departs | 5. Ship's company |
| 2. Fast-moving cereal | 6. First Lady is a fake! |
| 3. Elderly bird | 7. Start at cards |
| 4. Offal snooker | 8. Witches have a go |

Good luck! Answers (and more teasers) next time! [PW]

Life in the countryside

When it comes to organising a short walk Roy keeps his cards close to his chest. I overhead he is now advising the BBC weather presenters how to be more accurate with their forecasts !! After 36 hours of unabating rain we woke up this morning to glorious sunshine. Having rechecked the day's forecast I have come to the conclusion that the Maestro has his own portable micro-climate generator !

This month's outing was to the Bull at Furnace End. There is plenty of parking and everyone turned up in plenty of time and in good spirits. By now the day had become very warm.



Digressing for a moment to relate a story about working when for BT at Furnace End Telephone Exchange in the late 60's. There was a request to provide additional equipment for the increase in local demand for phones. The scene is in the middle of Summer and, with no such thing as Air-con, the main door was left open for extra ventilation. It was a very narrow building with only one room and the toilet was at the local pub.

I was working away oblivious that a stray cow had wandered into the building. As mentioned, the building was very small and there was no way the cow could turn round. Going outside I found the local farmer who collected a long rope with a harness and dutifully arrived to extricate the forlorn animal with rope and tractor. The cow did not take kindly being pulled backwards by the farmer. It became very agitated, deciding to leave its calling card all over the Exchange floor!!

The farmer eventually removed the cow and arranged to have the unwanted deposit removed which was duly done. Just to remind you it was still a baking hot day and not all the evidence had been removed. I decided to phone for our own cleaning staff to complete the job and went home early !

To complete our day I was asked not to mention the mud so I won't !! The walk itself was very pleasant with all the usual chat and banter. Returning to Ye Olde Bull - built in 1542 - for a fine meal and good service, not forgetting that Roy - in his inimitable style - had negotiated a very good price for the food (well below the Menu prices). Rod wound up the day with his usual style of humour proclaiming that he is now legitimate !!

Tony Ferneyhough

MUSICAL EVENING AT THE TOWN HALL, Sunday 28th April



They may still only be teenagers but these young musicians really know their stuff! - pw

Youth mixed with maturity as the Birmingham Schools Brass Band shared the stage with Gresley Male Voice Choir at Sutton Town Hall to provide a varied and most enjoyable Sunday evening's entertainment.

Formed in 1904 the Gresley Choir, led by an energetic lookalike of our Vice President, were created out of a Methodist background and are based at Swadlincote. Whilst they are rightly proud of long service by many members, almost a third are aged under 40 which bodes well for their future. They commenced proceedings with traditional songs and hymns interlaced with a Madrigal dating back to the Renaissance era, before finishing with hit numbers from leading shows.

With ages from 13-18 the thirty young people in the Birmingham Schools Brass Band have been drawn from 20 schools across the Midlands. Though they meet just once a week to rehearse they have established a major reputation. For the last 21 years they have been led by conductor Martin Orgill and they have played with Grimethorpe Colliery Band and performed at venues such as the Albert Hall and Symphony Hall. The minimum standard for entry is equivalent to Grade 6, and many members of the band have progressed to degrees in music and professional careers.

The band opened with an intricate "Disney Spectacular", followed by a number of pieces that allowed each section of the Band to lead, particularly Cornet and the Trombone, before closing with a Fantasia on British Sea Songs which had all of us clapping and stamping our feet. As an encore, Band and Choir combined for a marvellous rendition of "Jerusalem".

Our thanks to John Cheal and his fellow Rotarians for arranging an excellent evening which raised substantial monies for charity, most notably for the Air Ambulance.

- David Rooke

Long Walk – Calke Abbey, 2nd May 2013

Well what a smashing day! After being ankle deep in mud and sliding on the ice on previous walks it was lovely to stroll along through the Derbyshire countryside in glorious sunshine.

Our intrepid band of fifteen members and wives arrived at Calke Abbey and spent the first 10 minutes deciding whether to strip down to their 'Speedos' or don fleeces, waterproofs and gaiters. It was a bit like the start of a Formula One race; some opted for 'all weather', some 'intermediates' and some 'slicks'.

Guide for the day was Sherpa Graham who advised the party that in light of the recent news about the brawl at 24,000 feet during the ascent of Everest he had decided that, although it was not in the protocol, he needed to warn the adventurers about raucous and unruly behaviour on the peaks. Everyone agreed and 'off they jolly well went'!



The lovely weather was complemented by panoramic views over Derbyshire with the occasional plane taking off from nearby East Midlands Airport. This being the first 'pick-nick' walk of the year, Sherpa Graham and Janet had identified a great spot alongside the Staunton Harold Reservoir. The benches and facilities were ideal and provided a welcome respite and a chance to replenish the factor 30 sun-bloc

As we arrived at the picnic area one member of the party was heard to say that we had been going for 1 hour 35 minutes and Graham was still upright, a comment obviously about his Dancing on Ice demonstration at a previous walk in Clent Hills, where if not for the button coming off his duffle coat he would have been awarded 'straight 10s' for artistic temperament and style!

Well refreshed, the group set off again making the most of the weather and scenery until we arrived safely back at the car park. After a stewards enquiry whether we had walked 5.75 or 6.38 miles, a decision complicated by differing readings from two pedometers, it was agreed that whatever the distance it had been a great day, made even better by good company. Rod gave a well deserved vote of thanks to Sherpa Graham and the group dispersed back to Sutton.

- John Carrington

Events and Activities from May to September 2013

Thursday 23rd May

'Tales of a tour guide' - Mrs J.M. Carter

Vote of Thanks: Mike Lock

Newsletter Report: John Booth

Kitchen Rota: Jim Bailey,
Keith Keeley, Roger Phillips, John
Buckland, John Longmore

Thursday 6th June

Long Walk led by Mike Lock

Meet at Roy's at 9.30 a.m. to car-share

Sunday 9th—Tuesday June 13th

Spring Break—Dublin

Jim Bailey, coordinator

Thursday 20th June

Short Walk led by John Fellows

Monday 24th June

Gentleshaw Bowls Day

Mike Lock, coordinator

Thursday 27th June

'A Sweet Story' - Miss E. Scott

Vote of Thanks; John Buckland

Newsletter Report: Ray Clark

Kitchen Rota: John Booth,
Selby Betts, Terry Booth,
Roy Willson, Alfred Wallwork

Friday 28 June

President's Supper—The Terrace

Harry Medcalf/John Cheal, coordinators

Monday 1st July

Long Walk led by Brian Spencer

Monday 8th July

Catton Park & Afternoon Tea

Organiser; David Rooke

Thursday 18th July

Short Walk led by Roy Willson

Thursday 25th July

'Land Army Tales'

- Mrs Margaret Madeley

Vote of Thanks: Phillip Troman

Newsletter Report: Bob Badham

Kitchen Rota: Peter Prime,
Barry Parsonage, David Roy,
John Cheal, Derek Smith

Thursday 1st August

Long Walk led by Rod Crowley

Meet at Roy's at 9.30 a.m. to car-share

Sunday 4th August

BBBQ at the Fellows

John Buckland, coordinator

Thursday 15th August

Short walk led by Roy Willson

Thursday 22 August

'My visit to Afghanistan'

- Mrs E. Perkins

Vote of Thanks: Richard Humphrey

Newsletter Report; Barry Parsonage

Kitchen Rota: Brian Mallett,
Tim Daly, Mike Gospel,
Dennis Rose, Ian Scholes

Thursday 5th September

Long Walk led by Don Cooper

Meet at Roy's 9.30 a.m. to car share

Saturday 7—Monday 9th September

Autumn Break—'Downton Abbey'

(Highclere Castle)

Jim Bailey, coordinator

Thursday 19th September

Short Walk led by Roy Willson

Tuesday 24th September

Ladies Bowls Day

Organiser; Geoff Silvester

Bowls Fun Day at Ye Olde Windmill Inn at Gentleshaw

Mike Lock asks me to remind everyone that this most enjoyable day out is on Monday 24th June, for both members and partners. It attracts both experienced and novice bowlers, starts at 10.00 a.m. and finishes at 4.30 p.m.

Full details about the menu and costs are shown on the booking form, and you need to sign-up and pay at our next meeting on 23rd May. Mike is clearly worried that we won't find the venue and sent detailed directions - and I know from personal experience that you can drive for miles around those lanes! Here's the direct route from Sutton Coldfield, which takes about 30 minutes:

Take the A51 from Lichfield for 4 miles to the Longdon crossroads. Turn left turn (SP Gentleshaw) along a narrow lane for 2½ miles. (This lane starts as Borough Lane, changes to Dark Lane, then to Thorley's Hill, then to Malt House Road and finally to School Lane). Take care as it is very narrow in places! At Gentleshaw turn left for 200 yards and left again into Windmill Lane and the Inn – the car park is opposite.

BOWLS MATCH. On Tuesday May7th, the Probus Bowls section entertained Aldridge Probus Bowls club to a Friendly Match at the Conservative Club in Jockey road. In previous years when we had played in Aldridge we always lost but this time we showed them the way home by a convincing win of 122 to 84 points. Our thanks go to Peter Gray for looking after the scoreboard and Geoff Silvester for laying on the event and organised the refreshments. **Barry Parsonage**

Pub Amble on Thursday 20th June at The Samuel Barlow pub at Alvecote Marina, Near Tamworth

John Fellows is organising this walk, which is about 3.5 miles long, on the flat, with no stiles. Start is from the pub at 10.30 a.m. Directions as follows:-

Take new A5 from Mile Oak going East. Leave at second exit (B5440) sign-posted to Glascote/Wilnecote. Follow Marlborough Way (B5440) to the next roundabout, take third exit, right onto B5000 (Glascote Road). Go through three islands towards Polesworth, (approx 1.5 miles), then turn first left into **Robey Lane**. The Alvecote Marina & pub is about one mile down the lane, on the left.

Lunch is at 12.30pm. Two courses, tea/coffee, £9.00 (discounted)

Organiser: John Fellows (0121 311 0462). If you want to take part and have not already signed-in, then you need to contact John in advance to book your meal.

Long Walk at Kinver Edge on Thursday 6th June

Mike Lock sends another note about the long walk for June. This is a very scenic route, nearly 7 miles long and hilly in parts, with a steep ascent and descent near the start of the walk. There are toilet facilities at the start at the Kingsford Forest Park car park, which is situated at the O.S. map grid reference 823820.

Please meet at Roy Willson's home for a 9.15 a.m. departure, with car-sharing where possible. If you wish to travel independently, detailed directions will be available from Mike Lock by email or at the Club meeting on May 23rd. The walk is planned to start at 10.30 a.m. Please allow about 50 minutes for your journey to the start.

Mobile telephone number for use on the day only will be: 07779 747 027