

The Probus Club of Cirencester

**The First
30 Years**

1971 - 2001

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The beginning of the year 2001 signals two notable events. Firstly, January 1st marks the true beginning of the 21st Century.

Secondly, and more importantly, January 22nd marks the 30th anniversary of an inaugural meeting which resulted in the founding of The Probus Club of Cirencester. On the 29th January 1971 our founders met to elect the first committee, to limit membership to 40, to agree the timing of weekly meetings and fix the annual subscription. A week later they met again and resolved themselves into the First Annual General Meeting in order to approve the club constitution.

This was followed on 12th February with an informal meeting to provide an opportunity for members to mix freely and get to know each other. On 19th February a total of 23 members gathered together for the first 'real' meeting, that is to say, a meeting with a speaker - Peter Jackson, one of the founding fathers. All these meetings took place at the Community Room in the Waterloo, a venue which has been our very own meeting place for three decades.

What a breadth of worldly experience the original members must have brought with them. Bearing in mind it was to be an association for 'retired professional and business men', the youngest must have been in their 60s and the eldest at least in their 70s. Their dates of birth must have ranged from the final years of Queen Victoria, through those of Edward VIII to the beginning of the reign of King George V. The childhood of the oldest began in a world where national and international travel was by rail and sea. Rush-hour (if indeed there was such a thing) involved horse-drawn traffic. The aeroplane had probably not been invented and a passing air balloon or airship was something to rush out and marvel at.

As we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the foundation of our club it does us no harm at all to sit back and reflect on the events of the thirty years which have passed. To help us we have compiled a list of international and national headlines from each of those thirty years. Our club has lived through all of them.

We also include copies of some of the club's original 'source material' in the form of extracts from the minutes of committee and annual general meetings. These are unaccompanied by text since they speak for themselves and illustrate members 'thinking' in the early years.

Finally we include a selection of photographs provided by members, and widows of former members, in an attempt to bring to life our history.

I hope what follows will be of interest to you. It goes a little way towards recording the life of a club whose members are bound by a common fellowship.

Long may it continue.

January 2001

RESEARCHING THE HISTORICAL SIDE

The history of any association often relies, to a large extent, upon members' collective memories. Regrettably our founding fathers have now passed on so we rely in the main on bits of information they committed to writing.

As the Club developed it left behind three historical sources. The first is contained in Minute Books where secretaries have recorded, and Chairmen have confirmed, the transactions which took place at Annual General and Committee Meetings. A complete set of Minute Books exists for all the meetings over our thirty years history.

A second documentary source also exists covering the same period. This takes the form of a Record of Meetings. In the early years this duplicated some of what is contained in the Minute Books albeit in 'summary' form. The main purpose of the Record of Meetings was to provide details of what took place at ordinary weekly meetings. It includes the signatures of members attending and any apologies on one side, the weekly happenings being recorded on the other with the names of any visitors. The Secretary would painstakingly record all business discussed and a summary of the speaker's talk.

In more recent years Secretaries have become more cunning and reduced their workload considerably. The last full record of a weekly meeting is in respect of 15th March 1991. Thereafter the information became sparse, listing only the names of those attending, apologies for absence, stewards, speakers and votes of thanks. Now there is no longer a formal Record of Meetings at all. A simple 'tick' or the letter 'A' against a member's name in Register of Attendances shows whether he attended or was absent. The Speakers' Secretary keeps a list of the speakers' names and their subjects but a record of the sometimes boisterous administrative discussions is no longer kept.

It may be that officers in 1991 considered the business of keeping copious records was time consuming. Right! And they probably thought that, in any event, nobody was ever likely to want to read them. Wrong!

The third source consists of some rather dog-eared correspondence folders dating from the early 70s. From their condition they could well have originated in 1871 rather than 1971!

Perhaps a fourth source could be present members own recollections? Then again, perhaps not!

So what can we make of the information which can be found? Read on.

HOW TO MAKE A PROBUS CLUB

In January 1971 Lang Walters was the Chairman of the Community Service Committee of Cirencester Rotary Club. In many respects he is the real 'founder' of Cirencester Probus Club although he was, in the Club's early days, too young to qualify for membership, an event he postponed until the 1980s. However, he had the idea of establishing a Probus Club in the town and tested it out on Wally Kelley, Bill Moreton and Peter Jackson. The four got together over a cup of coffee in Wally's lounge and resolved to write to a motley collection of 'likely lads'. The thrust of his letter speaks for itself as follows:

Telephone
Cirencester 2953

Querns Lane House
Querns Lane
Cirencester

5th Jan. 1971

Dear

I write to you on behalf of the Rotary Club of Cirencester. The Town does a great deal for one section of Retired people but, we feel, another section is left very much on its own, namely the retired Professional or Business man, of whom you are one.

Such people, we believe, often feel somewhat lost and lonely when they retire, the more particularly so if on retirement they have moved into the Town or its surroundings and so may not know many, or indeed any, local people.

We are contemplating forming a simple and inexpensive Club for such retired men. The basic idea is that they would meet once a week from say 11 a.m. to 12-30 in some central and comfortable place. There they would have coffee and biscuits and an opportunity to meet men of similar background to themselves. Once the Club was formed they would probably like to have occasional Guest Speakers. They might, in addition, care to arrange outings to places that would interest them.

Touching on the matter of finance, we feel that a yearly subscription of from 10/= to £1 plus a weekly charge of about 2/= would be all that would be needed.

Your name has been suggested to us as being a man who might possibly be interested in the idea. Hence this note, and the invitation that follows.

You are invited to attend the first meeting of the Club at 11am on Friday, 22nd January. This will be held in the COMMON ROOM belonging to WATERLOO FLATS (Please see enclosed map). If you come, as I hope you will, you will of course in no way be committing yourself, but at the meeting we will try and give you more details. I would be most grateful if you would return the enclosed card to me.

Yours sincerely,

Lang Walters

So there is the document which started it all off. The result was that Lang's invitation was taken up by about twenty who duly turned up. We know that Lang was there with Peter Jackson and others as an old photograph, reproduced overleaf, shows.



Mr. Lang Walters (seated left), chairman of the community service committee of Cirencester Rotary Club, discusses the formation of a new club for retired professional and businessmen in the common room at Waterloo flats, Cirencester.

So how come it was a Rotary Club that created the impetus to set the ball rolling? As far as we can tell it stems from a document produced in 1969 by the Programme Advisory Service of Rotary International. This indicates that Probus Clubs sprang from two main sources. The first was the 'Campus Club' founded by the Rotary Club of Welwyn Garden City in 1965 and a 'Probus Club' founded by the Rotary Club of Caterham in 1967. Extracts from the first two pages of the document give the general idea of how Rotarians might go about things.

No. 37. CLUBS for RETIRED PROFESSIONAL and BUSINESS MEN

THE Clubs with which this document is concerned are specifically designed for men with a professional or business background who have retired, are partially retired, or are approaching retirement.

TITLE.—The Clubs spring from two main roots: the 'Campus' Club founded by the Rotary Club of Welwyn Garden City in 1965, and the 'Probus' Club founded by the Rotary Club of Caterham in 1967. The differences between them are so small that the only reason for mentioning the two separately is that those Clubs which spring from the Caterham experiment have, for the most part, adopted the name 'Probus' (i.e., professional and business, coupled with the 'honesty' and 'probity' of the Latin word 'probus', whereas the others have chosen various titles of their own (see page 3). This has occurred, perhaps, because some of these latter Clubs have been anxious to avoid any embarrassment which could arise from a too obvious stress upon the 'professional and business' status of the proposed membership.

PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Clubs is to provide a regular meeting point for retired professional and business men—particularly for those who would appreciate and value, in their retirement, increased social contacts and the opportunity for meeting others in similar circumstances, for a meal once a month, or more frequently. (In two Yorkshire towns Clubs have been initiated by the Rotary Clubs as a 'forum' meeting weekly for coffee and biscuits. These Clubs are open to all retired or semi-retired men, and are based on a modest payment by each member at each attendance. Speakers are invited, and in one town there is a membership of 90 from a total population of 11,000. The 'Probus'-type Club, as stated below, meets normally for luncheon once a month.)

'Probus' Clubs seem likely to prosper particularly—but not exclusively—in 'dormitory' or 'retirement' towns, where retired men may not have had the opportunities offered by more self-sufficient communities for the making of lifelong and lasting friendships over the years.

THE FIRST STEPS.—The first step of all is to decide two things: (a) whether there is likely to be a local demand for a Club of this kind; (b) whether, if such a demand is found to exist, a suitable meeting place is available.

The first task, should the decision to proceed be taken, is to gather together a list of names of those who might usefully be approached as prospective members of a 'Probus' Club (which may be taken, in this document, to include Clubs with similar intentions, but under other names). In the first instance, the members of the Rotary Club may be invited to supply their own personal lists, and in one Rotary Club it was suggested that the members should put forward the names of

When a list of prospective members has been gathered together, a letter in general terms can be sent to them individually. A draft of such a letter (used by the Rotary Club of Coulsdon) appears as *Appendix B*. It may be helpful to quote from a letter sent by another Rotary Club at this stage, making it clear that the Club was designed for those who 'for some reason or other have not had the time or opportunity to associate with their fellows during their business life'.

If the response to this first approach is thought to be sufficiently encouraging, the next step is the calling (by the Rotary Club) of a meeting which could lead to the formation of a 'Probus' Club. Alternatively, of course, the preliminary letter to prospective members can be dispensed with, and the full list of names and addresses can be provided with details of the time and place of the formation meeting. It is worth remembering that some retired people prefer not to be out at night, and it may be advisable to hold this first gathering in daylight hours, rather than after dark.

In one instance only nine prospective members turned up at such a preliminary meeting, but within a few weeks the 'Probus' Club's fame had spread, and the membership numbered 30.

Those members of the Rotary Club who are themselves retired or semi-retired should be urged to take a personal interest in the new Club and should be asked to attend its early meetings. Rotarians still active in business and professional life would be involved only till such time as the new body could be regarded as self-sufficient, when it would be left to arrange its own affairs with only a 'personal'—but, if possible, continuing—interest from the Rotary Club.

THE FORMATION MEETING.—At the Formation Meeting, the aims and objects of the proposed Club will be explained to those present. The following points should be stressed (whether or not this has already been done in a preliminary letter):—

1. That the future of the Club, if formed, will be in the hands of those who belong to it;
2. that expense will be kept to an absolute minimum, consonant with the standing of the proposed membership, but within the means of those living on modest resources;
3. that no competition is envisaged to existing local organizations for elderly people: e.g., 'Evergreen Clubs'; 'Over 60 Clubs', and similar groupings.

The normal result from a Formation Meeting is likely to be that those present will pass a resolution for the formation of a 'Probus' Club. It has been found useful to suggest that the members of the Rotary Club should organize the first three monthly luncheons of the 'Probus' Club, with the Rotary President in the chair, in order that the 'Probus' founder-members may get to know each other better before forming their own Committee. On the other hand, they can at once elect an Organization Committee which will be responsible for the preliminary arrangements. On this Committee it is likely (and desirable) that the Rotary Club should be represented.

Two or three future meetings, normally on a monthly basis, should be planned in any case. So far as the venue is concerned, it is suggested (in view of the nature of the Club) that a restaurant or hotel is preferable to church hall, school, community centre, etc.

Before the first of the meetings, members of the new Club could be asked if they

A Preliminary Meeting was held on 22nd January 1971 to assess support.

Probus Club.

Preliminary meeting held on Friday,
22nd January 1971 in the Common Room, Waterloo Hotel
at 11 am.

Mr. Lang Walters, acting on behalf of the Rotary Club of Cirencester, called a meeting of retired professional and business men of Cirencester and district to discuss the formation of a club where members could meet and enjoy social contacts with men of similar circumstances.

Approximately twenty men attended the meeting, some by personal invitation and others as a result of a preliminary notice of the meeting in the local press.

Mr. Walters outlined the aims and objects of the proposed club and was able to draw on the experience of the Rotary Club of Henford where such a club had been formed.

The M.D.C. of Cirencester had intimated that they would be prepared to offer the Common Room of the Waterloo Hotel, free of charge, as headquarters of such a club. This generous offer was much appreciated by all present.

After a lively discussion Mr. Walters asked for views on the formation of a Probus Club and unanimous support was given. A further meeting was arranged for Friday 29th January.

An Inaugural Meeting was held on 29th January to elect a Steering Committee.

Probus Club of Cismecator.

Minutes of Inaugural Meeting 11 am. Friday, 29th January
1971 in The Community Room, Walsley Hts.

The business of the meeting opened at 11.15 am
with Mr. L. Walker of Cismecator Rotary Club in the
Chair.

The Constitution of The Walsley Probus Club
was read in order to inform the gathering of
the lines on which a Probus Club is run.

Nominations were invited for the officers to form
a 'steering' committee to pilot the club through
the initial stages. The result was as follows:-

CHAIRMAN.	Mr. W. Helly	Proposed by Mr. Bick Seconded by Mr. Blackman
SECRETARY	Mr. W. Storeton	Proposed by Mr. Blackman Seconded by Mr. Cook
TREASURER	Mr. H. L. Cook	Proposed by Mr. Walker Seconded by Mr. Riddle

Mr. Webb proposed a vote of thanks to
Mr. Walker and Mr. P. Jackson for the work they
had done in initiating the Club. This was seconded by Mr. Helly

THE REST IS 'HISTORY'

1971 to 2001

The Year **Some of the national and international headlines - and some of our 'doings'**

1971 **First vehicle driven on the moon**
Introduction of internment in Northern Ireland
Decimal currency introduced in the UK on February 15th

Formation of The Probus Club of Cirencester

5th January - **Lang Walters circulated potential interested parties.**
22nd January - **Preliminary meeting held at 'The Waterloo.'**

The first meeting of the Probus Club of Cirencester was held on 5th February. Those attending were:

WH Kelley (Chairman)	GP Jackson	AC Munro	EP Rowlinson
JW Moreton (Secretary)	A Noble	HR Pride	HM Swann
TH Franklin	GH Crossland	D Beer	CR Webb
J Cook	B Tingle	TH Hulbert	JW Fleming
HL Cook (Treasurer)	LC Ridler		

Apologies received from: D Blick, Blackman, Coverly-Price

And so the Club got under way.

51 meetings were held during the first year including a sherry party, the first annual dinner and trips to London and Beaulieu. By the end of the first year there were 45 members, the average attendance at meetings was 25, the highest attendance during the year being 30.

CROWN HOTEL, CIRENCESTER

TOAST LIST

MENU

Grapefruit Cocktail

★

Roast Turkey with Stuffing
and Bacon Rolls

★

Seasonal Vegetables

★

Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce

★

Coffee

THE QUEEN

Proposed by THE CHAIRMAN

PROBUS CLUB OF CIRENCESTER
COUNCILLOR C. STAITE
CHAIRMAN CIRENCESTER U.D.C.
Reply WALLY KELLEY, CLUB CHAIRMAN

OUR GUESTS

BILL MORETON, Hon. Sec. Probus Club
Reply Rev. P. HEARN
President Cirencester Rotary Club

THE LADIES

JOE COOK, Hon. Treasurer Probus Club
Reply Mrs. P. SWANN

PROBUS CLUB OF CIRENCESTER

FIRST ANNUAL DINNER

26th January, 1972

This is the Menu and Toast List for the very first Annual Dinner held on 26th January 1972.

1972 **The Duke of Windsor died in Paris**
Arab terrorists killed 11 Israeli Olympians in Munich
President Truman died

The Club held 51 meetings and visited Hereford, the Royal Agricultural College, Longleat, a local school and Windsor. A bowls match was also held. Average attendance at meetings was 32 from a membership which had been officially increased from 40 to 50.

Chairman - Peter Jackson.

1973 **Last American troops leave Vietnam**
Watergate hearing begins
Britain became a full member of the EEC
IRA exploded a bomb outside the Old Bailey
VAT introduced
Noel Coward died

Again there were 51 meetings and the average attendance rose to 36. There had been outings to the Royal Agricultural College, The Vauxhall works at Luton and a bowls match.

Chairman - Ray Tranter.

1974 **Juan Peron died in Argentina**
President Nixon resigned - replaced by Gerald Ford
Labour won the election
The Flixborough disaster
IRA bombs explode at Westminster, Guildford and the Tower of London

The Club visited Birdland at Bourton on the Water, the American Museum and Didcot power station - and played a bowls match. The annual dinner was held at the Royal Agricultural College to which 78 people attended.

Chairman - Frank Cook.

1975 **General Franco dies**
Margaret Thatcher became Tory leader
The Balcombe Street seige

A visit to Warwick Castle, more bowling and a couple of sherry meetings were the main social events.

Chairman- Dick Allport-Williams.

1976 **President Eva Peron deposed**
First photographs from the surface of Mars
Jimmy Carter won the USA presidential election
President Mao died
Harold Wilson resigned
Deaths of Agatha Christie and Lord Montgomery of Alamein

1976 was a year in which the club welcomed no fewer than ten new members. It was also a year in which nearly half the speakers were members. Visits were made to Doulton's factory at Poole and to a performance of Oklahoma. Uniquely a party of members attended a meeting of Swindon Robus who entertained them to lunch and a game of bowls.

Chairman - Joe Cook.

[Around this period our three present senior members joined - Ken Hudson, John Ryland and Stan Strange.]

1977 **First test flight of the space shuttle**
580 die in double Jumbo jet collision in Tenerife
Elvis Presley died
IRA bomb the West End of London

The year began with a proposal at the AGM that subscriptions be increased from £1 to £1.50p to cover a 'small deficit arising from expenditure at the annual dinner'. Members, not easily persuaded to part with their cash, decided to adjourn a decision sine die! By the end of 1977 there was a waiting list for membership of sufficient size for the committee to suggest that those on the list consider forming a second Club. Inertia subsequently set in and the matter was not pursued. Visits during the year included Westonbirt Arboretum and Badminton House. A planned visit to Beaulieu was abandoned due to lack of support. Since the year included Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee the Club entered a team in the 'Brain of Cirencester' contest. The team was narrowly eliminated in the third round and persuaded to become stewards for the final - held at Cirencester School and chaired by Magnus Magnusson. In an annual bowls contest for the King's Cup the club walloped Cirencester Bowling Club by a large margin. A wall at the meeting room was decorated by the Club in a way which would allow audio-visual talks to be better presented.

Chairman - Harry Higgins.

1978 **President Pinochet increased his powers**
Deaths of Pope Paul VI (Aug 6th) and
Pope John Paul I (Sep 29th)
Election of Pope John Paul II (16th Oct)
Bulgarian defector Markov murdered in London
Birth of the first 'test-tube' baby

Money matters dominated committee meetings in 1978 and the word 'inflation' appeared in several of the minutes. It was reported that one speaker had asked for a donation of £10 to the Red Cross. The Treasurer pointed out, as treasurers are inclined to do, that donations of such size, 'were out of the question'. At a committee meeting on 14th June 1978 Ben Howell was admitted as a member.

The question of the selection of officers was raised, one member suggested the previous practice could be regarded as a closed shop! Volunteers should therefore be sought from members not serving on the 1978 committee. It was immediately found that this wonderfully democratic theory was unworkable in practice and subsequently some members already on the committee had to have their arms twisted to continue in office!

Chairman-Brigadier Ted Hughes.

- 1979** **The Shah fled Persia**
Ayatollah Khomeini returned from 16 years exile -
adopted an Islamic constitution and banned the
broadcasting of music!
Lord Mountbatten murdered by the IRA
Margaret Thatcher became the first British woman PM

The year began with finance dominating the AGM. Subscriptions did in fact go up to £1.50 during 1978 (the fateful day having quickly arrived!) and there was a motion that they now be raised to £2.00 per annum. The Chairman thought that £2 was not enough. As he pointed out, 'even the Brownies paid 4p a week which was equal to £2 per annum'. In the event members, obviously in a benevolent mood, agreed (19:12!) an increase to £2.50p. During the year trips arranged had to be cancelled because of lack of support. Cost seemed to be the main deterrent! Finally, a member volunteered a quite Utopian suggestion that there would be no need for a Programme Secretary if each of the 50 members found a speaker. 22 years on we still have a Programme Secretary!!

Chairman - Allen Lodge.

- 1980** **Robert Mugabe elected as Zimbabwe's PM**
Wreck of The Titanic found
Ronald Reagan elected president
Robert Runcie became Archbishop of Canterbury
Iranian embassy siege in London

For a number of years the Club had sent delegates to an annual conference of district Probus Clubs. Members began to question whether this was a worthwhile exercise as the 'same old chestnuts' were being raised year after year. The Secretary took the view that no kind of centralisation should be allowed to come about. Clubs should remain independent entities. No doubt several members had experience from their wives as to how Womens' Institutes worked! (The WI then paid a higher subs than The Brownies!) At the AGM Ken Hudson was elected as Treasurer. During the year Corinium Probus Club was formed with a membership closed at 25. This formation followed on work done by the committee who had been concerned at the size of our waiting list and had long advocated the formation of a second club.

Chairman - Ham Albert.

- 1981** **Attempts to murder President Reagan and**
Pope John Paul II
Arrest of the Yorkshire Ripper
Marriage of HRH The Prince of Wales
to Lady Diana Spencer
Race riots in Brixton and other British cities
Blanks fired at HM The Queen

1981 marked the Club's 10th anniversary. The usual events were held but nothing 'special' appears to have been done to celebrate this landmark.

Chairman - Peter Swann.

1982 **The Falklands war**
Birth of Prince William
First artificial heart used
Princess Grace of Monaco killed in a car crash
Intruder found in a Royal bedroom
IRA bombed the Royal Parks
Raising of the 'Mary Rose'

As a sign of the popularity of the Probus concept, the committee was obliged to agree that, as a matter of principle, so long as there was a waiting list, 'any applicant who is already a member of another Probus club should not be admitted'. The idea of contact with the Regional Conference continued to meet with disapproval and the committee decided not to send a representative to the 1982 conference.
Chairman - Stan Inward.

1983 **President Reagan proposed a 'Star Wars' defence system**
AIDS became a top health priority in USA
First American woman in space
Soviets shot down a South Korean airliner
America invaded Grenada
Denis Nilson arrested for the murder of 15 men

A busy year for the club - but with nothing out of the ordinary to report.
Chairman - Ken Hudson.

1984 **President Reagan re-elected**
Bhopal chemical disaster in India
Miners' strike began
Police Woman Yvonne Fletcher murdered outside the Libyan embassy
IRA bombed the Conservative party conference venue at the Grand Hotel in Brighton

At the AGM membership it was agreed that membership should be offered to Philip Beckerlegge. There were problems in finding volunteers to help with morning coffee (why did they not detail the newest member for his first month?) and an attempt was made to encourage wives to assist their incompetent husbands in this complex task. At a subsequent meeting the Chairman reported that (not surprisingly) wives had not taken the offer up. No doubt wives were smart enough to see this as the 'thin end of the wedge'.
Chairman- Peter Jackson for a second term of office.

1985 **Greenpeace ship 'Rainbow Warrior' sunk in New Zealand waters**
Heysel stadium tragedy
Fire at Bradford FC killed 56
Sir Clive Sinclair introduced the C5

For some time the Club waiting list had been closed. During the first week of January the list was re-opened for applications, there was an influx and the following week it was again closed. Shortly afterwards a Mr Norman Lloyd attended a meeting as a visitor. The price of morning coffee was increased for the first time - to 10p. A May committee meeting had a delayed start, according to the minutes, due to 'navigational errors'! Where is Minety? In June a newly elected member, Peter Webb, was introduced at a meeting. The Christmas Luncheon was cancelled through lack of support (maybe unsurprising as the venue was in Blunsdon!) The average age of members was shown as 75.

Chairman - Ham Albert for a second term.

[Peter Jackson and Ham Albert are the only members to date to serve as chairman for two terms of office.]

1986 **US planes (from Fairford) bombed Libya**
The 'Challenger' space disaster
Print dispute and riots at Wapping
Prince Andrew married Sarah Ferguson
Harold Macmillan died

Over the years the practice had grown up of holding 'open' meetings with no speaker to provide an opportunity for members to give forth on matters of concern. On 20th June, at such a meeting, a member opened with a complaint about the 'untidiness of Cirencester' and asked for suggestions. The minute in the Record of Meetings shows that, 'a forest of hands went up trying to attract the Chairman's attention'. At the conclusion of the meeting an appeal was read on behalf of the National Council for Civil Liberties. A member pointed out that there was a possible 'political' connection (implying it was against the Club constitution) and the matter appeared to die an instant death.

Chairman - 'Steve' Stevens.

1987 **Terry Waite kidnapped in The Lebanon**
Zeebrugge ferry disaster
Death of Rudolf Hess
Margaret Thatcher won a third term of office
Stock markets collapsed
The 'big storm'
Bomb killed 11 at an Ulster Remembrance Service

At the April committee meeting there was some discussion over the bill for the 1986 Christmas lunch. It was noted that, 'the catering bill somewhat exceeded the estimate and the wine bill showed a much more lavish consumption than had been expected.' No doubt members went home happy!

Chairman- Gerald Thompson.

1988 **IRA men shot in Gibraltar**
George Bush elected president
Kings Cross fire killed 30
230 died in the Lockerbie disaster

Two visitors were introduced at the 19th February meeting - Dr Fred James and a Mr Bernard Davies (sic). Both were enrolled as members soon afterwards, Bernard's surname then being correctly shown as 'Davis' and within weeks he had been persuaded to give a talk on 'The SSFA'! At a later meeting the Chairman (Philip Beckerlegge - a no-nonsense man if ever there was one) gave a stern warning that coffee would not be served after 10.15am! Coffee seemed to be much on members' minds. A Committee minute included a suggestion that a lady be asked to take on the task of dishing out the coffee 'for a small remuneration'. Now why did this not find favour! It was not a good year for attendances either. The minutes include instances of members not attending with the required frequency, the need to admonish them and an observation that some members had been guilty of 'signing in - then leaving!'

1989
Exxon Valdez pollution disaster
Fatwa declared on Salman Rushdie
96 died in the Hillsborough disaster
Tiananmen Square protests
Death of Ayatollah Khomeini
The San Francisco earthquake
End of the Berlin Wall

Coffee again - the provision of powdered, instead of fresh milk, was deemed satisfactory! (Did the minutes really mean this?) Members were requested to 'refrain from smoking during the formal proceedings of the meetings'. Difficulty was found in obtaining a volunteer for the post of programme co-ordinator. A temporary stand-in was found who, unfortunately for him, was later overheard saying he quite enjoyed doing it! Not surprisingly he found himself so engaged for the rest of that year and the whole of the next. New member Chris Absalom was introduced on 13th October.

The Chairman was Peter Webb.



Above - members attending a party at the home of Peter and Pam Webb in 1989.

Overleaf - a further photograph taken on the same occasion.



1990

Nelson Mandela released from prison.
Earthquake killed 40,000 in Iran
Mrs Thatcher ousted as party leader
Chanel tunnellers met in the middle
The Poll tax riots

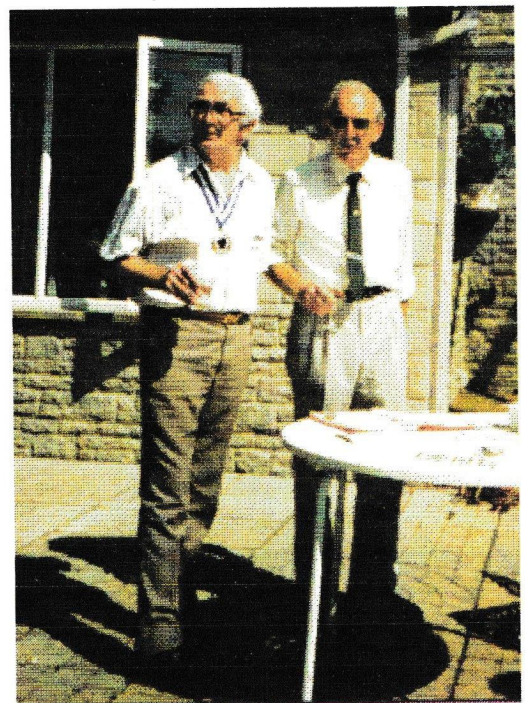
In January Norman Lloyd began his long-running and fascinating series of talks on his time in East Africa. During the early part of the year members subscribed to the purchase of a collarette for the Chairman. This was on display at the meeting on 25th May and placed around Peter Tiffany's neck, the minutes record, 'to the accompaniment of loud applause!' During the year a foreign coach trip was arranged by Bernard Davis. As a result about 30 members and wives spent 8 days based at Annecy. This appears to have gone down very well.

[As far as the records go this was last, possibly the only, trip abroad the club has ever had. The Club then, as now, suffered because a large number of members who had 'been there, done that and got the T-shirt'. It currently has an average age in the upper seventies and the prospect of a long coach trip no longer attracts them. In this respect it does not differ from other Gloucestershire Probus clubs. For example, none of the 15 Cheltenham Clubs goes far afield on its own. However, by banding together they are able to find sufficient to make overseas trips viable.]

A luncheon was held at The Crown of Crucis on 3rd October to celebrate the forthcoming 20th anniversary of the Club. This was attended by 57 members and guests and there was a display of member artists' work. Finally, during January, the first (as far as we can tell) group photograph of members was taken. Some faces 'old' and 'new'.



And some photographs of a Cheese & Wine party at the home of Cyril & Kath Mundy at Ampney Crucis



And one more - Don Slingsby with founder member Peter Jackson.



1991

The Gulf War

Rajiv Ghandi assassinated

Boris Yeltsin elected as Russian president

Serbs began to attack other former Yugoslav states

Terry Waite released

The meeting on 8th February was attended by only 18 members 'due to snow'. At a committee meeting the following month the secretary, referring to a new system whereby members had to sign in, said it was working well and observed, 'one can now see at a glance if any reprimands have to be given or anyone cashiered due to lack of attendance'. The Committee clearly intended running a 'tight ship'! It was at this same meeting that a decision was made to discontinue recording a summary of the weekly talks - only brief details of speaker, subject, host and numbers attending needed to be given in future. (Shame!)

Chairman - Norman Lloyd.

1992

Bill Clinton elected to the US presidency

Blaze at Windsor Castle

Conservatives won a fourth consecutive election.

Subscriptions increased from £5 to £12 to take account of the increasing fees charged by speakers. It proved a busy year as far as visits were concerned with members travelling to Herefordshire villages and enjoying a canal trip.

Chairman - Donald Slingsby.

1993 **Waco siege ended in disaster**
 Jamie Bulger murdered
 World Trade Center bombed

During the year members visited the Three Choirs Vineyard. The minutes record that members 'were well able to negotiate returning to the coach!' The minutes also recorded that during the year a Mr Peter Rowe was introduced as a guest and subsequently became a member. Whatever became of him?

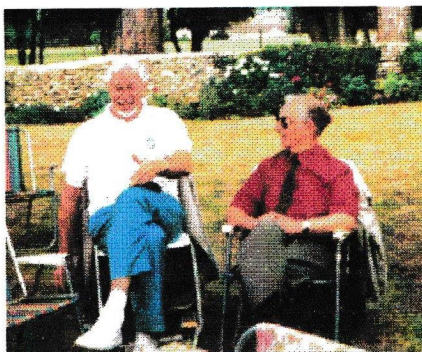
Chairman for the year was Morris Harding.

1994 **Major earthquake hits Los Angeles**
 Nelson Mandela sworn in
 The arrest of OJ Simpson

For the first time in the club's history, minutes of committee meetings were typed making the task of later researchers much easier. Founder member Wally Kelley died during the year. His widow, Monica, made a generous donation much of which was spent on producing the Past Chairmen's Honours Board which, ever since, has graced our Friday meetings providing a tangible link with those who went before us. Oldest member Bert Parry had attended 50 out of a possible 51 meetings. Then a record attendance but since beaten in the late 1990s by Brian Walters with 50 out of 50. Chairman - Dr Fred James.

1995 **Earthquake hits Kobe**
 Discovery docks with Mir
 Poison gas attack in Tokyo

This was a busy year although one in which outside speakers became difficult to find. As always, members stepped into the breach. It was also a sad year with the passing of Laurie Clark, Les Williams, Frank Cook and David Saville all of whom had played important parts in the early management of the club. During the year another party was held at Ampney Crucis where the photographs which follow were taken. Chairman- Ken Ponting.





1996

**TWA plane crashed into the Atlantic
Dunblane massacre**

The Club sent a message of sympathy to the Headmaster of Dunblane school. A planned trip to Buckingham Palace and others to Evesham and Tewkesbury did not attract sufficient support and members generally were apathetic about trips. A point was thus reached when members, having earlier enjoyed a couple of outings a year seemed less keen to travel - a trend which has continued to the present. By contrast the numbers of lunches and dinners held were increased and have been invariably well attended. However, a trip to an Open Day at Brize Norton RAF base did take place and a dozen members found themselves airborne for a flight as far as the Scilly Isles. Finances improved to an extent where the Treasurer was moved to recommend a decrease to £10 for one year.

Chairman - Chris Absalom.

1996 marked the 25th Anniversary of the Club. One of the events to mark the occasion was a members lunch at the Fleece Hotel. Prior to the meal those attending posed, somewhat unsteadily, with the Chairman. (Photograph below)



1997 Death of Diana Princess of Wales

Chairman - Bernard Davis. One frequent point of discussion was the unsolicited delivery of a magazine styled 'Probus'. This journal did not find favour with members because of the commercial content of many of its columns.

The Christmas Lunch was again held at Minchinhampton Golf Club and the photograph below shows a table of diners attacking the main course!



1998

Swissair disaster off the coast of Nova Scotia - 229 died

During the year Jim Aldred donated a sum (at the time anonymously) for the purchase of a slide projector which has since been put to good use. An aid to easy listening in the clubroom resulted from the installation of a loop system. Speakers using the old tethered microphone had appeared to be attached to a long leash! John Stevens opened his garden as the venue for a summer cheese and wine party. In doing so he created a precedent which members happily take advantage of year after year. One visit did get off the ground when a party visited the social history museum at St Fagens. There was also an afternoon out at Highgrove. Regrettably His Royal Highness was not there to greet us in person but he arranged a beautifully warm sunny day for what proved an excellent afternoon out.

Dr. Eric Gibson)

(Chairman for the year -

1999

General Pinochet detained in London.
Prince of Wales visited Argentina.
First sitting of the 'new' Scottish Parliament.
Bombing campaign over Serbia and Kosovo.
Kosovo 'liberated'.

This year saw the subscriptions raised to £20, an event which passed off (surprisingly) without dissent. This unusual generosity resulted from the fact that the clubroom appeared likely to be the subject of considerable renovation and any temporary accommodation would come at a price. How long would the members be so acquiescent though? A 'new' event was introduced during the year in the form of a meeting, not only for members, but for their wives to be present - if only to see that members' absence from home each Friday really was for an occasion of some (limited) dignity. The scene was the Masonic Hall and the 'speaker' was Mr John Nott who, in effect, provided a musical interlude. This was followed by a luncheon to conclude a very special occasion. Wives and guests immediately enquired as to whether this might become an annual event!

(Chairman - John Stevens)

2000

The Millennium Dome and Eye opened - for a few months.
The Millennium Bridge over the Thames (intended as a permanent feature) also opened - but closed within days!
President Yeltsin retired.
General Pinochet released and returned to Chile.
A 'Concorde' crashed outside Paris.
A Russian nuclear submarine was lost.
Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother celebrated her centenary.
President Milosovic defeated in the Serbian presidential election.
Enigma machine stolen from Bletchley.
And rained and it rained and it rained!!

January 1st 2000 was regarded by many throughout the country, mainly those seeking an excuse for a party, as the start of the 'new millennium'. Consequently many a celebratory event was planned well in advance. The club saw it as an opportunity to begin the year with a Millennium Luncheon. The event was a great success. Beginning with a sherry reception it was followed by

an excellent meal. The services of Mr Knott were again called upon to provide the after-lunch entertainment. Wives immediately enquired as to whether this event too could be repeated! They were informed that if they chose to be patient until the next millennium then it surely would. The social co-ordinator, still losing sleep over the doubtful legality of cheese and wine parties at the clubroom, arranged for a coffee morning to be held at the Masonic Hall instead and this too was well attended.

A second Spring Dinner was arranged for Minchinhampton Golf Club but the venue became unavailable and the Masonic Hall came to the rescue. In the summer a second open meeting for the benefit, not only of member but guests too, took place at the Masonic Hall. Again a great success.

Finally, again to mark the year 2000 a Millennium Record was produced. This took the form of a booklet reminding us of the club's beginnings in 1971, listing the founding and present members and as many of the past members whose details could be traced. On the whole, a very successful year 2000.

(Chairman for the Millennium year - Peter Payne)

2001

**30th anniversary of the founding
of the Probus Club of Cirencester**

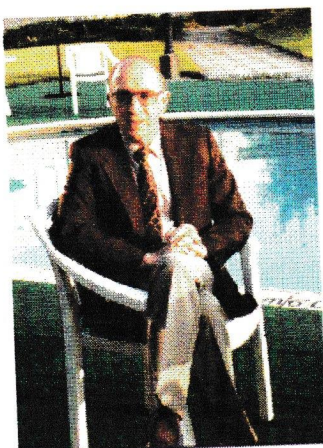
How do you celebrate an anniversary of a Probus Club which is one of the oldest and most successful in the country. The answer, the committee believes, is to give members more of what they appear to enjoy. The programme for 2001 begins with a coffee morning at the Bingham Hall (a first) and 30th Anniversary Lunch. The Committee hopes that they have planned a year which will not only satisfy the aims set out in our constitution but, more importantly, will be a source of enjoyment to members, their wives and their guests. The document you are reading, looking back over the history of the club and remembering those who went before us, is yet another way of celebrating the fellowship which has stemmed from its existence.

What of the future? Over the years some things have changed while others remained the same. Those remaining the same include the venue for our meetings, the morning coffee over which there is much putting right of world and local affairs, followed by a speaker. Things that are changing include the fact that the average age of the club is nearing the eighty mark. Maybe something in the club is promoting longevity? And yet, with this ageing, there seems to be an increased sense of fun. Whether the latter stems from the increased baiting of successive Chairmen during the past decade, or the somewhat dubious anecdotes that are publicly shared around, matters not. The more we laugh at the world around us, and at ourselves, the better. Those of us who give talks to other clubs sense that laughter is a commodity more in evidence in ours than others.

Clearly the format of the Club as envisaged thirty years ago is about right. It ain't 'broke' and justifies no serious 'mending'. At the same time we should not be afraid to seek ways of doing something differently on occasions.

The committee hopes you will enjoy this anniversary year. Live long and be happy.

(Chairman for the Anniversary Year - George Field)



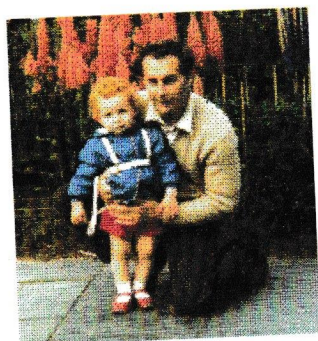
**Peter
and
Maureen Rowe**



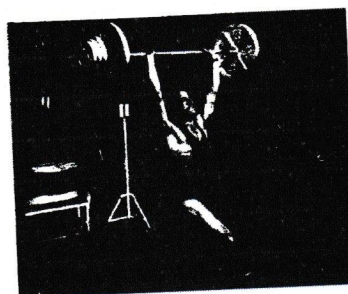
**Fred
and
Dorothy
James**



Puzzle corner. Recognise anyone?



(1972)



(1959)

A view from the top table

From time to time Chairmen are known to wax lyrical. None more so than Chris Absalom on the occasion of the Club's 25th Anniversary Christmas Luncheon at Minchinhampton in November 1996. The lyrics are reproduced here since they say something about the composition of our Probus Club in 1996. With a little amendment they could be equally appropriate in 2001.

Oh! Its great to be The Chairman of a Probus Club like ours,
When we meet on Friday mornings and talk for hours and hours.
We come along each week not much caring for the weather,
And we drink the coffee offered as we huddle together.

We discuss what's in *The Standard*, what's on telly, who's gone sick,
From all the current topics it's a case of take your pick.
We're a motley lot of 'has-beens' - under bushels lights they hide,
And to get a talk from some of them's not easy 'cos I've tried.

But they're all there every Friday, and on the days they've cheesed and wined,
They stagger home to those who care and say, "I'm glad I joined".
On other weeks (without the drink) they drop off and they snore,
And when at home and asked, "Who spoke?" they say some chap - a shocking bore.

As men of means you'd think we're rich, but pounds we haven't many,
Things are so bad, thanks to Bob Bliss we're down to our last Penny.
We've got two Fields (and one's a Hors); we could feed well no doubt,
With Hartley's jam, and then some Rowe from a well upholstered Trout.

We've got seven chaps called Peter - one's a Payne - that's how it goes,
The other six are nondescript, so I'll not waste time on those.
We've got Erics and some Dereks, we've got Normans, Bills and Kens,
There's more to come in different guise and they're all best of friends.

We've got scholars and ex servicemen who like their chota peg,
There's a legal buff, who's had enough, called Philip Beckerlegge.
There are some printers and some policemen - one from the Holy nations,
He's fought the Arabs and the Jews and quotes from Revelations.

We've got a Harding and a Howell and a Hudson and a Hutch,
He's a new lad and a big lad, so were dare'nt offend him much.
Accoustically we have no probs but one of my pet hates,
Is the call I get, "Can't hear you!" from Maurice Blaster Bates.

**We've got Doctors, Dons, Professors; we've got Plebians and Patricians,
We've got silent men and men of words and even some musicians.
We've got calligraphers, philatellists and a vicar campanologist,
And if we dig down deep enough we find two archaeologists.**

**There are naval men and army men and men of air machines,
But modesty [!!!!] demands tight lips - but there's one from the Royal Marines.
Some like travel, some like golfing, some like bowls or angling,
The clever ones boast of their craft in cooking, painting, rambling.**

**There are engineers and managers and gardeners of great skill,
With exploits of their lives vast pages I could fill.
But on market days you hear their feet along each urban street,
To rendezvous in Waterloo to take their chosen seat.**

**And it's there again, once every week, full satisfied with life,
And some have said, "If we came twice, we'd get on better with the wife".
But ladies, looking lovely, we're pleased you're here - yes really,
And when we say "We love you" we do so most sincerely.**

**There are Probuses scattered in this world for miles and miles,
But Number 1 in Ciren is the place you'll find the smiles.
No grumbles or refusals when the Chairman makes requests,
It's the manner of his sly approach is what they most detest.**

**Yes, it's great to be The Chairman just for a few more weeks,
The office holds no terrors, but produces more grey streaks.
In 5 and 20 years just gone, yes, you've already guessed,
That the Probus we belong to, is from near and far the best.**

© Christopher Absalom (poet and raconteur)



Chris (with top table guests) resting after his rendition and wondering whether to give up the day job and become a poet - or whether to finish the bottle and get on with some golf.

PUZZLE CORNER - CONTINUED

Towns, villages and hamlets - not too far from Cirencester

- 1 But surely our feathered friends have beaks?
- 2 Down under it bulges out.
- 3 An ideal place for the tight-fisted.
- 4 Akeman Street where Betty's grave is.
You need to have your disc available.
- 5 People come for miles to see a real old timers' villa, or what's left of it.
- 6 A river, a trout farm and its a bit hilly. Two interment?
- 7 All golf and commons and cows all over the road.
- 8 French fries and meat over the border.
- 9 Begins with a bomb and ends with an afternoon drink.
- 10 417 meets the 361 by the river.
- 11 A reasonable way to cross water.
- 12 There's definitely a north and a south but they are kept a part by a churn.
- 13 Like the titled steeplechaser and commentator.
- 14 One stop by train from the 'Town' station until Beeching. Now it needs a bus or taxi.
- 15 Definitely things for the colder weather.
- 16 Through the tunnel and wood,
perhaps this is the way they brought the bacon home?
- 17 With its little house and bridges its sort of a model village.
- 18 They had a prison but now it guards old agricultural things.
- 19 This deer has a pebble in its hoof?
- 20 The second biggest borough in the county but a bit posher than the
biggest.
- 21 Are you out, or what?
- 22 Utterly butterly once, but now the creamery's gone.
- 23 Put away where the 'wind grows cold'.
- 24 Close to home the Romans had a name for it, the Normans another, Shakespeare a
different one and now we call it something else.
- 25 There's a bigger one in Surrey which is famous for its butts.
- 26 Maybe a south London football team brought their royalty here?
- 27 There's a bigger one in Lancashire with a famous polar extremity.

Former Members of the Probus Club of Cirencester

So far the names of 130 former members of the club have been traced.

Reg Adlington
 Ham Albert **
 Dick Allport-Williams
 Victor Annette
 George Allsop
 Alan Arthur
 Bill Bailey
 Oliver Bannister
 Maurice Bates
 Jack Bazley
 Donald Beer #
 Reggie Berkeley
 George Blackman #
 Dennis Blick #
 Henry Bride #
 Charles Burdett
 Arthur Burge
 Reg Bunt
 David Cayley
 Jack Clappen
 Laurie Clark
 Alfred Coates
 Eric Cole
 Frank Cook **
 Joe Cook #
 Arthur Cooper
 Victor Coverley-Price #
 Len Craddock
 George Crossland #
 Bert Day
 Rafe Defferary
 Ray Denning
 Mervyn Dobson
 George B Dray
 Jack Elliott
 Harold Ford
 Owen Forsdyke #
 Tom Franklin #
 Bert Furness
 Brian Gegg
 Len Green
 HL Greer
 George Groucutt
 Toby Gurd
 Bob Hall
 Archie Halliday

Ron Harlow
 Arthur Harnden
 CS Hart
 Bert Hatcher
 Charles Hawkins
 Dan Heaven
 Harry Higgins
 Freddy Holtam
 George Horner
 Jack Horsfield
 Charles How
 Ben Howell
 Frank Howes
 George Hudson
 Ted Hughes *
 Francis Hulbert #
 Stanley Inward
 Peter Jackson **
 Harry Jennings
 Wally Kelley **
 Len King
 Mervyn Lascelles
 Horace Legg
 Allan Lodge
 Neville Le Fleming #
 Patrick MacIlwaine
 Eric Marsh
 George Martin
 Raymond Matthews
 John Miller
 Bill Minnis
 Ernest Mitchell
 Bill Moreton #
 Cyril Mundy
 Archie Munro #
 Arthur Noble #
 Leslie Ovens
 Fred Packer
 Bert Parry
 Lindley Passmore
 Alex Payne
 Graham Peddie
 Sid Percival
 John Phillips
 Peter Piper
 Bernard Platford

Bill Pymm
 Laurence Ridler
 Lawrie Robinson
 Frank Sanders
 Alan Say
 Jack Scantlebury
 Gerry Searle
 H Slack
 Edgar Smith
 Hugh Spear
 Cyril Staite
 Ted Stockling
 Peter Swann **
 Bill Taylor
 Bill Tarn
 Gerald Thompson
 John Ticehurst
 Bert Tingle #
 Tommy Tomlinson #
 Eric Tranter
 Ray Tranter *
 Cecil Turner
 John Vaughan
 George Verney
 Bill Vigar
 Lang Walters
 Howard Walton
 Willy Watt
 Richard Watts
 Alan Weatherley
 Ted Webb #
 Tom Webber
 Tom Wells
 John Westwood
 Ernie White
 Leslie Williams
 George Wilson
 WH Woodhouse
 Charles Wright
 John Young
 • denotes held the Office
 of Chairman
 • # denotes a founder
 member

The Club's First Committee - 1971/2

Chairman	Wally Kelley	A former Inspector in the Children's Dept at the Home Office
Hon. Sec	Bill Moreton	A former headmaster
Hon. Treasurer	Joe Cook	A former Senior Principal Inspector of Taxes
Members	Frank Cook	Former Scientific & Technical Officer ,Overseas Civil Service
	Ted Webb	A former CID officer

Chairmen

1971	WH Kelley	1981	Peter Swann	1991	NH Lloyd
1972	GP Jackson	1982	SF Inward	1992	D Slingsby
1973	ARM Tranter	1983	KJ Hudson	1993	MK Harding
1974	MF Cook	1984	GP Jackson	1994	Dr. F James
1975	R Allport-Williams	1985	Ham Albert	1995	K Ponting
1976	HL Cook	1986	L Stevens	1996	CT Absalom
1977	HJ Higgings	1987	GA Thompson	1997	B Davis
1978	Brig. FEC Hughes	1988	P Beckerlegge	1998	Dr. EJ Gibson
1979	AR Lodge	1989	PH Webb	1999	J Stevens
1980	Ham Albert	1990	PN Tiffany	2000	Peter Payne
		2001	George Field		

Members of the Probus Club of Cirencester - 2001

1	Chris Absalom *	20	Gavin Langley	39	John Stevens *
2	Ron Haggerty	21	Dr Fred James *	40	Stan Strange (S)
3	Brian Walters	22	Malcolm Wilson	41	Martin Barnett
4	Peter Rowe	23	Dr Geoff Richards	42	Bob Bliss
5	George Field*	24	Norman Lloyd *	43	Peter Tiffany *
6	Gerry Cutts	25	Peter Williams	44	
7	Philip Beckerlegge *	26	Ross Mitchell	45	Bill Walkey
8	Prof. Roy Postlethwaite	27	John Pascoe	46	Tom Kolb
9	Bernard Davis *	28	Derek Nicholas	47	George Strawbridge
10	Bill Durham	29	Peter Van der Linde	48	Peter Webb *
11	Dr Eric Gibson *	30	Peter Payne *	49	Ted Woodhouse
12	Morris Harding*	31	Ken Ponting *	50	David Wray
13	Rev. Peter Hearn	32	George Richards		
14	Eric Hartley	33	John Ryland (S)		
15	Desmond Lindsey	34	Tony Hutchinson		
16	Clifford Titmus	35	Norman Whereat		
17	Gordon Ralph	36	Derrick Seath		
18	Elwyn Roberts	37	Don Slingsby *		
19	Ken Hudson * (S)	38	Albert Penny		

• denotes held the office
of Chairman
(S) denotes Senior Member
- pre 1978

Peter Payne



George Field





Printed on behalf of the Club by Peter Payne. Research by Peter Rowe
Photographs courtesy of Mr/Mrs Strawbridge, Mr/Mrs Webb,
Me/Mrs Absalom, Dr/Mrs James, Mrs Kath Mundy, Mr/Mrs Tiffany