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*Welcome  
to  
Probus*



# Welcome to Probus!

The following pages are intended to give you some background to the Probus Club of Devizes of which you have now become a member. We hope you will find the information both useful and interesting!

## The Probus Concept

The concept of all Probus Clubs follows the ideal of providing a gathering of like-minded retired people who want to extend their circle of friends and foster new interests. Through this simple philosophy Probus has grown and continues to develop at a tremendous rate for both men and women, and in some cases clubs of mixed gender.

## Origin of the name Probus

Club membership is generally composed of, but not restricted to, retired and semi-retired professional men and women.

Members of the first Probus Club were asked to suggest a name for the club and many names were put forward until one member came up with the idea of PROBUS taking the first three letters from 'PROfessional and BUSiness'. He assured everyone that Probus was a Latin word from which 'Probity' was derived and the new name was adopted with enthusiasm.

Incidentally there is a village in Cornwall near Truro called Probus and its name is derived from Saint Probus after whom the Church, along with Saint Grace is named. The church has the highest tower in Cornwall and is visited frequently. The village is also famous for its gardens, which attract visitors from Europe and further afield and featured regularly on the television programme 'Gardeners World'.

Probus was also the name of a Roman emperor who apparently devoted himself to developing the internal resources of the empire, but fearing that the army would deteriorate with inactivity, he employed the soldiers on public works. Such occupations were deemed degrading and excited discontent and a body of troops engaged in draining the swamps about Sirmium murdered him in AD282. He was also reputed to be famous in his day for cultivating vines.

# A Brief History of Probus

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1965

One of the first clubs was formed by the Rotary Club of Welwyn Garden City, 25 miles from London, with Fred Carnill as the driving force. When he retired he occasionally used to meet a few other retired friends for morning coffee – mostly ex-commuters to London with professional and business backgrounds and lots of experience behind them. There were many men in the area with similar backgrounds, all of them commuters previously unable to participate in the life of the town. This gave him the idea of starting a luncheon club. He phoned some of his friends and all were agreeable. The Rotary Club President arranged the first meeting and 45 men attended. So the first club was born.

That first club was named The Campus Club, derived from the fact that the meeting place was facing the centre of town called 'The Campus'.

The Rotary District took up the scheme with the result that Rotary International (Britain and Ireland) published a leaflet about the idea to encourage other Rotary Clubs to sponsor similar clubs in their areas.

At about the same time in September 1965 Harold Blanchard, then Chairman of Caterham Rotary Club Vocational Service Committee, retired from business there and, in trying to be helpful, got under his wife's feet in the kitchen. His wife is reputed to have made a comment to the effect that she was grateful when he attended a Rotary lunch once a week and added "Why can't you do something for the wives of retired men who are not Rotarians?"

He too saw the need for something for retired business men who did not have the same opportunities or inclination for social contacts in the district due to the hours spent commuting and working out of the area.

The members of the Rotary Club Vocational Service Committee decided that the least that could be done was to organise perhaps a monthly lunch to enable them to meet for fellowship and social activities in their own club. The idea was put to the Rotary Club Council who agreed with the suggestion and told the Committee to see it through.

The Committee decided to publicise their proposals and, in February 1966, called a meeting at a local hotel for all retired professional and businessmen aged 60 and over living in the local area. 42 prospective members turned up and it was decided that a monthly lunch should be arranged so that the men

could widen their range of acquaintances. It was suggested that, as individuals were virtual strangers to each other, it would be advisable if the Rotary Club President took the Chair so that the members of the new club could get to know each other before electing their own officers and drawing up simple rules.

The inaugural luncheon of the first PROBUS Club in the United Kingdom therefore took place on the 2nd March 1966 and in May of that year a Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of the late Harold Blanchard, then Chairman of the Rotary Club Vocational Service Committee, who is now accepted as the 'Father Figure' of Probus.

It was felt that members had suffered too many rules and regulations during their working lives and for this reason very simple Probus Club rules were adopted. The Chairman was to serve for one year only and Committee members should occupy their posts for an average of two years. This encouraged volunteers to come forward and helped to ensure a continual current of fresh ideas in the club.

The success of the Probus Club of Caterham very soon became known among neighbouring Rotary Clubs and the whole concept, being so simple, snowballed with new clubs springing up everywhere.

As there is no central world body, it is difficult to tell the exact number of Probus clubs in existence, but there are well over 2000 clubs in Great Britain and Ireland. There are others in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Malta, South Africa, Spain, USA, Canada, Bermuda and South Pacific, Australia and New Zealand, India, Argentina, Chile, and Malaysia.

Some countries do have their own governing body for Probus, but Great Britain and Ireland do not. Each club is autonomous, making its own rules and decisions about time, place and regularity of meetings, and the format that these gatherings follow. Some clubs are still sponsored by their local Rotary Club and others spring up from waiting lists of thriving clubs.

## **About Devizes Probus Club**

Our own Club was formed in 1972, on the initiative of the Rotary Club of Devizes. An exploratory meeting was held, to which 16 retired men were invited for the purpose of discussing the proposal. At that meeting, it was resolved to make a start and interim officials were appointed, under the chairmanship of John Broadbent, a retired Wiltshire Chief Fire Officer.

The first Club meeting took place on Tuesday 2nd November 1972, when it was decided to meet regularly on the first and third Tuesdays of each month; members would assemble for coffee and chat from about 10:30 am, the meeting proper to start at 11 am and end by 12 noon. A programme of speakers would be arranged. This format has continued almost unaltered over the years and appears to be acceptable to all our members.

John Broadbent continued to serve as our Chairman for a record 6 years, followed by 7 years as President (an office created solely in his honour and never used since).

Today it's usual for the Chairman to have served the previous year as Vice-Chairman, and then to serve as Chairman for a period of one year.

### **Activities**

In addition to the twice-monthly meetings, a Skittles Morning is held on the second Tuesday of each month, when members and their partners gather at a local hostelry (at 10:30am) for coffee, chat, and optionally to play skittles, darts and shove-ha'penny (small prizes are awarded), before the morning ends with lunch.

In addition, occasional outings are organised to places of interest, details being announced at the twice-monthly meetings. In recent years, this programme has also included a short group holiday.

An Annual Lunch or Dinner is arranged, usually in the Autumn. Other social functions are included from time to time at the wish of the membership and the discretion of the Officers and Committee.

### **Speakers**

The twice-monthly meetings have remained ever popular, due in no small measure to the good standard of our speakers. The Programme Secretary has a constant struggle to find suitable speakers. Some of the most popular and successful talks have been those given by our own members, who have spoken about their former work, holidays or a particular interest or hobby. For this reason, every new member is expected to give at least one talk. If you feel unable to do this (and we appreciate that public speaking is not everyone's forte) we ask that, instead, you suggest another speaker to the programme Secretary, who can then make the necessary arrangements to include the suggestion in his future programme.

## **Proposing New Members**

Members may submit proposals for new memberships after they have themselves been members for two years. The appropriate forms can be obtained from the Registrar. Such proposals must also be seconded by a member of at last two years standing who also knows the candidate.

A member who is proposing someone as a member is asked to bring that person to a meeting as a guest, so that the Committee (and other members) may have an early opportunity to meet the person being proposed.

## **Inactive List**

A few years ago, a new category of membership was created - that of 'Inactive' Membership. This enables established members with good attendance records, who are prevented from attending because of long term illness or other valid reason, to retain contact with the Club while at the same time freeing places to allow persons on the Waiting List to be admitted as members. 'Inactive Members' still pay their annual subscription, and receive copies of the magazine 'Probus Life', the Meetings Programme and any other circulations as available. When fit, they can resume active membership, subject to membership conditions at that time.

## **Directory**

The Secretary holds a copy of the Directory & Yearbook of Probus Clubs in Great Britain & Northern Ireland. Members wishing to consult this book (perhaps in preparation for a visit to another part of the country) are welcome to do so.

## **And Finally**

There has always been a waiting list of persons wishing to become members of our Probus Club. In an attempt to improve the rate of admission of new members, the Committee have decided that Clause 3 (e) of our Constitution and Rules shall be strictly enforced.

We ask therefore that subscriptions are paid promptly and that, should you find yourself in a situation where you are likely to be absent from meetings for a considerable period, you inform the Registrar or other member of the Committee.

**We hope that you enjoy a long and happy membership of Probus**

# THE PROBUS CLUB OF DEVIZES

## Constitution & Rules (2013)

### 1. TITLE

The Club shall be known as “The Probus Club of Devizes”.

### 2. PURPOSE

The aim of the Club is to provide a regular meeting point for members and to promote social well-being through companionship, discussion and such other pursuits as may be agreed upon. The Club shall be non-political and non-sectarian.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

- a) Membership is open to all professional and business persons who are resident in Devizes area who have retired or are partially retired.
- b) An applicant for membership shall be proposed and seconded by existing members who have been members of the Club for at least two years. It is customary for the member introducing a new applicant to invite that person to attend at least one meeting before his acceptance into the Club. Details of a proposed new member must be provided on the Club's approved form of application obtainable from the Club Registrar or Secretary. All applications for membership must be approved by the Club Committee.
- c) An application for membership from a member of another Probus Club shall take precedence over any other person wanting to join.
- d) A register of members and their attendance at meetings will be maintained by the Registrar. Whenever possible, members should advise the Registrar of their intended absence from meetings.
- e) A member shall be deemed to have relinquished his membership in the event that
  - i) the annual subscription has not been paid within three months of the due date

or

- ii) Attendance at only eight or fewer of the Club's regular meetings in the twelve months preceding a meeting of the Committee.
- f) The Committee shall review the Attendance Register at their meetings and will consider whether or not there are extenuating circumstances, such as long term illness, when considering whether or not to apply the provisions of clause 3(e).
- g) At the discretion of the Committee, paid up members prevented from attending by long term illness or other reason may be transferred to the list of Inactive Members, absolving them from the attendance criteria set out at 3(e)(ii) above. Inactive members may resume active membership at any time if active membership numbers permit.
- h) At the discretion of the Committee, Honorary Membership may be offered to a member who has given long and outstanding service to the Club.
- i) The total membership, not including honorary members, shall not exceed the number to be determined by the Committee from time to time.

#### **4. COMMITTEE**

- a) There shall be a Committee responsible for overseeing the affairs of the Club on behalf of its members to ensure its smooth running and success.
- b) The Committee shall comprise a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Programme Co-ordinator, Membership Registrar, Web Master and four other members, all to be elected from and by the members at each Annual General Meeting. The Committee shall have power to co-opt.
- c) The Chairman will not normally hold office for more than one year and on his retirement the Vice Chairman will normally succeed.
- d) The Chairman shall be an ex-officio member of the Committee for the year following his Chairmanship.
- e) The Committee may appoint one or more sub-committees.

f) Five members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum.

## **5. MEETINGS**

- a) Ordinary meetings of the Club will normally be held on the first and third Tuesday of each month commencing at 10:30 am.
- b) An Annual General Meeting shall be held in the month of February each year. Notice of such meeting shall be served by way of publication in the Meetings Programme and by way of reminder to members attending any of the preceding two ordinary meetings.

## **6. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS**

The Secretary shall call a Special General Meeting on the written request of not less than five members and shall give members at least two weeks' notice of any such meeting in the same manner as for an Annual General Meeting.

## **7. VOTING**

Voting at all meetings shall be by a show of hands, or by ballot if requested by the majority of the members present. In the event of an equal division of votes, the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

## **8. GUESTS**

Any member may occasionally introduce a guest to a Club meeting.

## **9. SAFETY**

The Committee shall ensure that the total number of members, guests and speakers at meetings does not exceed the safety limit for the premises being used.

## **10. SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The annual subscription shall be determined by the Committee and reported to the members in a general meeting. The subscription shall be payable annually on 1<sup>st</sup> January and, unless waived by the Committee, shall be paid by new members on joining.

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## **11. ACCOUNTS**

A Statement of Accounts for the period to the end of December each year shall be prepared by the Treasurer, audited by the Honorary Auditor and presented for approval at the Annual General Meeting.

## **12. AUDITOR**

An Honorary Auditor, who may be a member of the Club, shall be appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

## **13. BANK ACCOUNT**

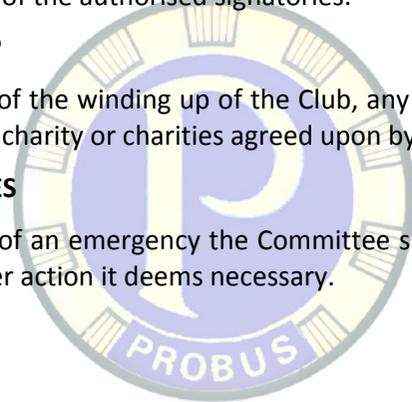
A bank account (or accounts) shall be opened and maintained by the Treasurer. All withdrawals shall require two signatures. The signatories shall be the Treasurer, or in his absence the Chairman, countersigned by one other of the authorised signatories.

## **14. WINDING UP**

In the event of the winding up of the Club, any surplus funds shall be donated to a charity or charities agreed upon by the Committee.

## **15. EMERGENCIES**

In the event of an emergency the Committee shall be empowered to take whatever action it deems necessary.



## NOTES



