

Portland Probus Club Annual General Meeting

Held on Thursday March 7th 2019
At The Heights Hotel, Portland

MINUTES

1. President's welcome:

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting especially the new members. He was especially sorry that Dianne, daughter of Margaret Woods was unable to be there as her father, Bryan Woods was poorly. He wished them both well and mentioned how we miss Margaret hugely and remember her with great affection.

2. Apologies:

Apologies were received from Mo and Mike Duthoit, Rowland and Pamela Reynolds, Dianne Pilliaert, Bryan Woods, Anne Ashworth, Joan frith, Rob Francis,

3. Acceptance of the minutes of the last AGM; 2018:

The acceptance of the minutes of last years AGM as a correct record was proposed by Anne Prendergast and seconded by Jim Chapman and carried unanimously by the members.

4. Matters arising:

There were no matters arising.

5. Reports:

a) Vice President:

Over the last year there were no requirements for me to stand in for President Ken. As the year developed, my main task of moving members to the meeting room on time improved!

The only important task that I undertook during the year was to develop the PPC General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy. In common with other Clubs and Organisations that collect and hold personal data, Portland Probus Club became subject to the provisions of GDPR from the 25 May 2018. An amendment was made to cover this in our Byelaws on 14 June 2018 and appropriate action to comply was taken by Committee members.

Rob Coward

b) Past President:

At the 2018 AGM the members voted for the introduction of a new member of the Management Committee. During the past year I have undertaken this role providing support to existing and new members of the committee using my past six years experience on the committee.

I have been able to contribute on matters arising such as speaker selection, acceptance of new members, helping plan and participate in the Christmas review in addition to discussion participation at committee meetings

Trevor Collins

c) Secretary:

As secretary of the club this year I have seen my main role as keeping members informed of meetings, of any changes to the Constitution or Bye Laws and writing up the minutes of the six committee meetings which are held during the year. The writing up of the committee meeting minutes has very much been a joint effort between Ken and myself. Thank you Ken for your help with this.

These minutes are then sent to Rob who makes them available on the website for members to read. I would also like to thank Rob who has helped me along the way with a few computer problems and works tirelessly for us all putting things on the website which I know involves a lot of work. Thank you Rob.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my year on the committee. My computer skills have improved enormously and working with this brilliant group with Ken at the helm has been a real pleasure. Thank you all and keep up the good work!

Carol Lambkin

d) Treasurer:

Everyone should have sight of the Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31st January 2019.

First, I'd like to thank our auditors, Mo Duthoit and Joan Lewis, for their thorough scrutiny of the accounts.

By comparison with last year, we are showing a significant surplus - £900.86. Three factors contribute especially to this:

1. The figure includes £400 of subscriptions for 2019/2020.
2. During the year, we have welcomed 6 new members – with subscriptions and joining fees totalling £150
3. Our speakers have cost only £386.70, £433 less than last year and well under the budget of £750.

It is my opinion that the Club's finances are healthy. Our income is consistent with our policy of holding a modest contingency reserve whilst giving the committee, especially the Speaker Finder, flexibility to work without 'penny pinching'.

Andy Webb

e) Speaker Finder:

During 2018/19 I attempted to find a varied selection of speakers which I hope appealed to most tastes. We only had one speaker unable to attend through illness, but I was able to book a replacement at very short notice. Dave Carter came along and gave a talk on 'The Life of Marie Stopes' which went down very well. Our in house speakers were Jim Chapman in January with 'It Happened at the Wall', Chris Hornby in August with 'A Mild Colonial Boy' and Stuart Morris in January with 'Weymouth Piers and Pavilions'. They were all very excellent presentations for which I am most grateful.

Rob Scott

f) Event Co-ordinator:

I would like to start this report by thanking those members who contributed and undertook events during 2018. Without doubt it would be a far lesser club if members did not come forward and give up a little time and energy on behalf of the club so it is a big thank you to them.

In my first year as Events Coordinator I hope members found the interim events programme interesting and stimulating.

Looking back over the year there is a trend towards events that are closer to home in terms of take-up as demonstrated by our last external event in November to the Castle Town D Day Centre organised by Pat and myself where thirty six members and guests attended. At odds with this trend was the Bovington Tank Museum event in March, again organised by Pat and myself. It was not hugely popular despite being local although lunch at the Countryman went down well. In retrospect a guided tour tailored for our visit would have made for a more rounded event but at the time of organising I felt that the cost was prohibitive.

I will mention by name those members who organised and helped get our events programme delivered during 2018/19. The Etches collection organised by Ken, Lytes Cary Manor organised by Ken, Compton Acres organised by Joan, Summer Lunch at Abbey House organised by Andy and Mary, Picnic and walk at Kingston Lacy (shame about the weather) organised by Judith, Langhams vineyard organised by Madeleine, Highcliffe Castle organised by Pat and myself, the quiz organised and hosted by Angela and finally Island Discs organised and hosted by Jim. I'll say a little more on Island Discs in my resume for 2019/20. All of these events I believe had been well received.

Finally, not forgetting the 2018 Heights Christmas revue.....well done Angela and Trevor and all who took part.

Graham Gardiner

g) Publicity:

The position of the club's Publicity Officer is to write up reports to go on the website following both our main monthly and interim meetings and secondly to produce a Probe leaflet / magazine.

I enjoy listening to the speakers where I make a few notes. I then try to capture the feeling of the meeting as well as reflecting as accurately as possible what was said and went on in a report which I send to Rob for the website. The challenge here is to try and get the report to Rob so that it can go up on the website that or the next day at the latest. At times this can be challenging to me and Rob, especially Rob, if he is in France trying to obtain a connection in some rural spot.

I try to attend all the events and meetings. There are occasions when this is not possible and I would like to say a big thank you to those members who have willingly or been cajoled into writing reports in my absence.

The wonderful photographs you see at the top of website home page of articles are usually the work of Rob but, here again I must say thank you to several other members who have also produced lovely photographs on my behalf.

There have been two Probes this year and if honest I have not been happy with what I have achieved with either of them. At a recent management committee meeting I indicated that, with regret, I would like to cease being responsible for producing the Probe. There are several reasons for this including not being able to justify the cost, difficulty in obtaining what I laid down for myself as suitable and appropriate material and probably not having the complete skills to produce a smart, attractive leaflet / magazine. I would be more than happy to assist anybody else who feels that they could take on producing a Probe.

I have indicated that I will try and produce an article on a topic relating to our Probus club to submit to the Probus magazine, which we have recently started to receive.

Thank you all for your help and assistance you have given me in my position as publicity officer for the club. If re-elected I will endeavour to continue working hard in the publicity role.

Mike Duthoit

h) Webmaster:

Over the last year, twenty three write-ups and associated photos, covering all main Meeting Talks and Events, were processed and published on the Home page of the website. Yet again I would particularly like to thank Mike Duthoit, and all other writers and photographers, for passing me this data.

The Programme page was amended many times to reflect changes and additional information as the organisation of Speakers and Events progressed. Several additional pages to expand information on Events were also produced as and when they were required. Again I would like to thank all the Event organisers for producing the original data for these pages.

Password protection of the website's Download page was removed during the year to make access easier for all to see.

From 15 August 2018, our website hosting company, Heart Internet, doubled the space we have available (5GB increased to 10GB) and our monthly bandwidth was increased from 30GB to 50GB. Although this sounds good, there was a non-negotiable increase in the price. Since we were not using our full webspace or bandwidth to start with, this gives us a significant increase in what we can do with our website. Initially I have increased the number of previous front page entries that remain on the website. Any ideas that members may have as to how we could use this additional space would be much appreciated. Either way, it is considered that our contract with Heart Internet is good value for money.

The Notice Board page continues to be underused; why not use it to try and sell all those items sculling around your garages and gardens!

Following PPC commencing receipt of the Probus UK Magazine, which also allows Probus Clubs to add pages to their website at no additional cost, it seemed that we could almost replicate our current website using their built-in WordPress software i.e. a designated Portland Probus Webmaster would access (using a username and password) our area of their website and directly update it (text and photos), rather similar to editing a MSWord document.

I have investigated replicating our current website, using their built-in WordPress software within the Probus UK website, and have found that it is far too limited to achieve the same professional standard. However, I have added some of our data to their website and will update it as necessary.

I therefore intend to continue to run the two websites since no additional cost is involved and it would be there as a fall-back mode, should we not be able to continue with our own website at any point in the future.

On average the PPC website is added to or amended once every five days. As always, any ideas for possible improvements and or additions to our website would be much appreciated; please email me with any proposals.

Rob Coward

i) Membership:

Our membership policy, along with all other aspects of Portland Probus Club, was brought into line with current Data Protection rules in the past year and is now fully compliant with them. As usual, there have recently been a small number of changes to our membership data such as altered email addresses, and a few comings and goings of members, so we will be issuing new lists of all current members' contact details and their photos shortly. These are to be kept solely for fellow members' own personal usage concerning Portland Probus Club and should never be shared with anyone else. It is every individual member's responsibility to do this and also to destroy all previous lists still in their possession as soon as any new list is issued. Hopefully everyone wishing to remain a member has now paid to our Treasurer their annual subscription which was due in by today's meeting.

Sadly, we lost one popular member of longstanding who died last July and she is much missed. Also, four people (two men and two women) have decided, for various personal reasons, not to renew their membership this coming year. However, during the course of the last twelve months, we have been delighted to welcome seven new members: - three men and four women, whom we hope will continue to enjoy their membership privileges whilst bringing their own particular assets and talents to our club.

All of which means that, as of this year's AGM, our membership count stands at sixty-six (including our two permanent life members).

Angela Welton

j) Welfare:

Inevitably, several of our members have suffered health setbacks during the year and on behalf of the Club I have telephoned them and/or sent cards to convey our best

wishes for their speedy recovery. It was with great sadness that the Club suffered the loss of Margaret Wood in July of last year. Margaret is fondly remembered and much missed by so many.

The average attendance at Monthly Meetings has been 40, or 61% - more or less in line with last year.

Once again, I would mention that if there is any member about whom you feel I should know, please contact me.

Mary Webb

k) Philosophy group:

The philosophy group continues to meet regularly on the second Thursday of each month, here at the Heights, the group had maintained a membership of seven, but more recently has grown to ten. We meet for two hours, the first hour is spent on a subject of interest in the field of philosophy which is brought to the group for discussion and then we spend the second hour focusing on the applicability of philosophical reasoning in the present.

Most recently we have looked at theories of morality and ethics, also the theory of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, and the pervasive influence of his theories in university humanities departments today.

At our last meeting we had a spirited discussion on freedom of speech, we had not at the time registered the fact, that shortly after our meeting we were to be reminded that it is thirty years since the publication of Salman Rushdie's book the Satanic verses, with the burnings of his book, the fatwa on his life and the killing of two of his publishers. A very significant event, freedom of speech in the United Kingdom, was changed perhaps forever.

At our next meeting we will be discussing that controversial question, do we have free will.

Rob Francis

l) Presidents report:

It may surprise some of you to know that I have actually totally enjoyed my year as President and Chairman of Portland Probus Club, or should I say eleven months. And for that I thank you all.

I guess it is fair to say that the start of my year was somewhat unconventional with the Beast from the East delaying our AGM and as such my baptism so to speak. But to continue the "religious" analogy, what I had not expected was a "baptism of fire" and so I sincerely hope that my "confirmation" today is a somewhat quieter affair.

I have no intention of dwelling on what happened at that last AGM, but whilst I will always look back on those events with considerable sadness, looking at it positively, I think perhaps it gave many of us an even greater incentive to make our club stronger.

However, what I would say, and this is somewhat ironic, the position of Vice President, which was retained by the AGM against the recommendation of the then committee, is the position that we had greatest difficulty filling for the coming year. And perhaps that says something.

But could I return to my “thank you’s” and again a huge thank you to you all for supporting me throughout my year.

Any successful club, such as ours, can only survive through members participation and it has given me great pleasure to see the considerable number of members attending both meetings and events. I know from speaking to members of other local Probus clubs that they are quite envious of our level of activity and participation.

The second requirement of a successful club is to have an enthusiastic and committed management committee and it has been a huge pleasure for me to Chair our six committee meetings over the past year - indeed it has been great fun, which I guess is what it is all about. So a huge thank you to all committee members - not just for your considerable efforts and commitment, but also for making my job both easier and most pleasurable.

I would however like to say a particular thank you to two of our committee members who will now be stepping down and I speak of Carol and Trevor. Both have served on the committee for many years with considerable commitment and effort and I am particularly thankful to Carol for agreeing, at very short notice last year, to step in again as Secretary for one year. As well as my personal thanks to you both, I also know that the whole membership is extremely grateful to you.

To complete my thank you’s, once again we have all enjoyed the considerable hospitality of the Heights Hotel over the past year. We are extremely fortunate to be able to benefit from what is probably one of the best hotel locations in the UK and a hotel team which gives us a great service. So a big thank you to all of the Hotel’s staff and in particular to Jim for continuing as House Member and ensuring that our relationship with the Hotel provides such a valuable contribution to our club.

Finally, could I once again thank our two auditors, Mo and Joan. In many ways the role of an auditor is a bit of a thankless task, but it is absolutely essential in ensuring that our club runs properly.

During my year as President, as well as dealing with the day to day issues, I have felt it important to try and ensure that we have good management succession in our management committee. Because without doubt, if we do not have a fully operational management committee, we do not have a club. Unfortunately, looking forward, I do not think I have done very well in this endeavour.

But I make no apologies for my many comments and pleas for members to come forward to serve on the management committee. I think Rob may be saying something on this issue shortly, but suffice for me to say to all of you, PLEASE, PLEASE consider what contribution each and every one of you can make. As I have said already, ours is a very successful club, but we can only carry on being successful with your efforts and contribution.

In thinking over various conversations over the past year, I have heard concern expressed that we have become a bit of a “rules and regulations” type of organisation - combined with the comment, “it did not used to be like this”. Whilst I have some sympathy for such sentiments, the fact is that we have to operate as a club in the world as we find it today - which is a very different world from that which existed when the club was founded. Whether it be related to Public Liability or Data Protection (GDPR), we have legal responsibilities placed upon us and whilst understanding the frustrations of some of you, we have to protect ourselves, both as individuals and as a club.

Finally, could I refer to The PROBE and our recent decision to stop publishing it - at least for the time being. Mike has already referred to this issue in his report and so I will not dwell on it, but I do think it sad that it has proved so difficult to obtain contributions. I am sure that the PROBUS Magazine, which we all now receive, will be read with great interest by you all, but it is no substitute for the real “local interest” of the PROBE. So I hope that at some time in the near future, the PROBE can be reborn.

So finally, finally. My thanks again to you all for allowing me to be your President and Chairman for the past year. I am very proud to have held the position and to have had your support.

And so could I finish by presenting our President Elect with a gift and of course I speak of THE ELF outfit.

Ken Hutchings

Vote of thanks:

Wendy Hill thanked all the members of the committee on behalf of the Probus members for all their hard work during the last year.

Presentation of the EGG:

Firstly, many thanks to the twenty six members who replied to this year’s Club Feedback questionnaire, a slight reduction on last year.

Before I give you the results, could I stress to you all the importance of returning these questionnaires. They really do give an insight of what you have liked, both for speakers and interim events. As such they are very important in deciding what type of speakers we secure and the type of events organised in the future.

Firstly to the general comments made on returns, again very helpful in taking the club forward

There were many compliments about the splendid work that Rob Coward continues to carry out on our website. It seems that members visit the website at least once a month and quite often twice. So a big thank you again to Rob for that.

Some members were concerned about interim events which involved long travel journeys and other about increasing club rules and regulations. There were also comments about the need for more members getting involved.

So, to the Main Monthly Meetings

Most speakers were given three and two stars - which is what one would expect, but one meeting did receive a large number of 1*s and that was the AGM! I say no more!

There were two real stars in the year. The first was David Carter with his talk on 'The Life of Marie Stopes'. David actually stood in as a late replacement speaker. The other was Bruce Upton talking on 'Ropes and Netting'.

In highlighting these two speakers, it must also be reported that a further three speakers scored well and, guess what, if a few more questionnaires had been completed they might just have featured in the top spots!

Last year's Christmas Revue and Party also scored well.

And now on to the Interim Events and the EGG Award for the year

If you recall, last year we had two winners and indeed this year we have had five events closely vying for the EGG award - which is very pleasing.

It often takes a lot of time and effort arranging interim activities and events and I think a really big thank you is due all those members who worked hard to give us some super events and activities.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I can announce that, Joyce Scott, assisted of course by Rob, the organisers of 'Truth and Lies' is this year's EGG winner. Well done and congratulations to Joyce and Rob.

Ken Hutchings on behalf of Mike Duthoit

6 a) 2018/2019 committee stands down:

b) Voting for new 2019/2020 committee:

The following members were proposed by Janette Martindill, seconded by Ronnie Robb to serve on the Probus committee for 2019/2020.

Members present agreed unanimously with this proposal.

PRESIDENT	Rob Coward
VICE PRESIDENT	Alan Newberry
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT	Ken Hutchings
SECRETARY	David Geary
TREASURER	Andy Webb

SPEAKER FINDER	Rob Scott
EVENT COORDINATOR	Graham Gardiner
PUBLICITY	Mike Duthoit
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Angela Welton
WELFARE	Mary Webb
WEBMASTER	Rob Coward

7) Hand over to the new committee + presentation of the Past President Pin:

The old committee stood down, the new committee took up their places and Rob presented Ken with his Past Presidents pin.

8) New President's acceptance speech:

First of all thank you for doing me the honour of being your next President. My first action is to present Past President Ken with his Past President's badge which he so well deserves.

I have been around since the conception of the club and have watched it develop and indeed enlarge over the years. We are all very lucky to be members of such a popular and successful Club.

I would like to sincerely thank Ken, not only for receipt of the recently introduced badge of office (the Elf outfit), but also for all the excellent work he has done for our Club over the years but particularly over the last year as President. His extremely professional, courteous, diplomatic and management skills will be a difficult, if not impossible, act to follow

To the new committee, may I welcome you all to the 2019-2020 Probus Committee year; I very much look forward to us having fun together at our Committee meetings. Now on the subject of the Committee, everybody knows that, as with all clubs, after a few years it becomes difficult to fill Committee places. At the AGM last year we tried to reduce the size of the Committee by removing the post of Vice President, and identifying a Committee member who would be the next year's president, as President Elect, but as we all remember that nearly caused WW3 in Portland Probus Club! Democracy demanded that the place on the Committee remained and Ken did a wonderful job in delicately resolving Committee membership problems during, and at the end, of his year but a fundamental problem still exists. For example Andy has kindly agreed to be our Treasurer for another year after completing the normal 3 year stint. In addition, for next Portland Probus Club year (2020-2021), not only must we find a Treasurer replacement but also two other posts, if we are to maintain the valid concept of 'up to a maximum of three years in post'. And dare I add further that we also need to find a new Vice President to volunteer from this year's Committee. This is not 'project fear', which seems to be the current in phrase, it is reality.

If our club is to continue to thrive we need to change and I want us to act more as a team or family who all wish help each other. On a personal note, I have been through a terrible time over the last two years following Beate's death but I am coming out of the end of a long dark tunnel, thanks to massive support and help from close friends, mainly within Probus, and of course my family. In addition, on a lighter note, one little dog, looking a bit like a mop, has helped me so much, probably because she agrees with everything that I say!

Back to my team and family point; now I know that many of you have contributed significantly to our Club both on the Committee and in other ways. There are also quite a few who have not as yet been able to do so. Now some of those, yet to contribute to the Committee, have good reasons due to health or personal circumstances but there are others who have allowed themselves to be swept along and have been slow in coming forward. I would be so grateful if all those members who fall into this category would seriously think about what they could give back to our wonderful Club. We cannot continue the crisis management that we have had to do over the last few years if our club is going to survive. We need to plan well ahead so please, all of you, think hard about joining the Committee, or indeed re-joining the Committee, at some point in the near future. Committee meetings are not only interesting and rewarding but, most importantly, they are fun. Please let us come together as a team and ensure that our wonderful club survives.

So that's the adverts over and the final task that I have today is to say that I have asked Mo Duthoit and Joan Lewis to be next year's auditors and I am delighted to say that they have agreed.

Rob Coward

9) Appointment of auditors:

Mo Duthoit and Joan Lewis were once again appointed auditors for next year and thanked for their work auditing the 2018/2019 accounts.

10) Speaker finder's resume of 2018/2019 programme:

Again I have attempted to book a diverse selection of speakers for 2019/20. I thought for our in house speakers we could maybe ask members to talk for no more than 10 minutes on any subject, be it an incident in their life, a career related subject or even a holiday experience, anything that will be of entertainment. This way we can have three or four people make a contribution. If anyone has any thoughts please let me know. I hope you find our forthcoming subjects a pleasure.

Rob Scott

11) Event Co-ordinator to give a resume of the of 2018/2019 programme:

As you will all know our events are published on our Club website and in hard copy so I do not think it is necessary to go through each event here. Events for the coming year are by and large nearer to home but it is always good to stretch out a little and visit places a little further away. So, in October we are planning a coach trip to A la Ronde (NT) near Exeter. This is a unique, quirky, 18th century house which I'm sure will be interesting, fascinating and a good day out.

In between we have our traditional events, Abbey House in July organised by Andy and Mary, the picnic in August which this year will take place at Sturminster Mill Museum and in January the quiz again organised by Angela.

I am looking for a volunteer to organise this year's picnic event.

On that point, it would be great if other members rather than the same faces could bring their own stamp on events and expand our joint experiences. It's not rocket science and I am always happy to help and provide guidance.

As I mentioned in my resume for 2018, In February this year, Desert Island Discs hosted by Jim was facing the axe. Jim had found it difficult to get members to come forward. Of the 26 members that attended on the day, many wanted to make sure that it continued in the future as it was such good fun. Mo stepped up followed by a host of hands going up to take part next February (20). Jim is happy to host this in-house event so thank you Jim.

My final word would be, please take part, organise events, get involved, it is great fun and not difficult.

Graham Gardiner

12) AOB: No one had submitted anything under AOB so the meeting was declared closed.