

NEWSLETTER



NEWENT & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



NOVEMBER 2025

Message from our Chairman

I am not a climate change denier but I do object to being told whether or not I can use my wood burner. We like to stay warm in the winter months and I really do not see why some city dwelling politicians should lecture us on this. We live in the Forest of Dean after all which is where the wood comes from, together with any trees that came down last year in the garden. I have my own log splitter for the purpose.

Anyway, as I see it we are using less oil as a consequence so that must be green!

I am told that AI is all the rage these days with it being used by children to write their essays, comedians to write their jokes and even by judges in their written pronouncements. I decided to ask AI to write an introduction to a newsletter for elderly retired gentlemen. When I sent the result to Fraser he responded with "*Blimey !! they will think you have become the Poet Laurette*"

Undeterred by his harsh response I have decided to include the following words of AI wisdom;

"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream," or how about "Retirement is the world's longest coffee break"

I didn't know that computers drank coffee but then again, why not. It is supposed to be good for you, as long as you can still afford it.

Over the last few weeks, I have been busy helping various journalists unpick the increasingly bizarre proposals being made to the chancellor for taking more money off us ahead of the budget on 26 November.

Fortunately, it will soon be over and we can get back to the realities of life, such as keeping warm

And remember, Christmas is coming

Mike

PUB LUNCH



WEDNESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2025

**THE TRUMPET INN
TRUMPET,
LED'BURY
HR8 2RA
12.30 for 13.00**

WHAT THREE WORDS: challenge.enhancement.laugh

TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER



ANTARCTICA

Graham Mawdsley

An experience of living on the ice in the mid 1970's

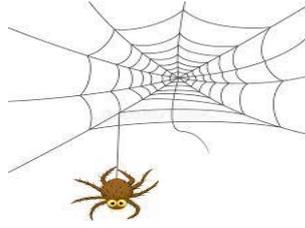
TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER



KIRSTIE BINGHAM

THE ARCANE, BIZARRE AND
DARN RIGHT WITCHY!

DELVING INTO THE WEIRD AND
WONDERFUL HISTORY OF
WITCHCRAFT SUPERSTITION,



NEVER A FOOT WRONG

It's a cliché around this time of year for hacks to trot out a variation of "Autumn a season of mist and mellow fruitfulness".

Stuck at my keyboard, I was thinking of this when I watched a spider laboriously spinning its web.

As each section was conscientiously put into place, a puff of early morning mist momentarily engulfed it but, undeterred, it carried on with its task. It scurried precariously over the seemingly fine strands, fragile yet strong enough to trap the largest and most belligerent fly to make a mouthwatering repast for the arachnid's family.

As I watched, no less fascinated by this eternal time long ritual, the thought struck me. Here goes the multi legged spider' with no semblance of care, clod hopping over and though these fragile strands with apparent ease. Yes, should an unwary fly touch it with just one of its myriad feelers, it becomes inextricably stuck, left to its gory fate.

As I might have guessed, over millions of years of evolution Mother Nature has provided an answer.

Spiders avoid getting stuck in their own webs through a combination of specialized leg anatomy, careful movement, and the strategic design of their webs.

They also have extra claws which help them grasp the threads and provide traction as they move.

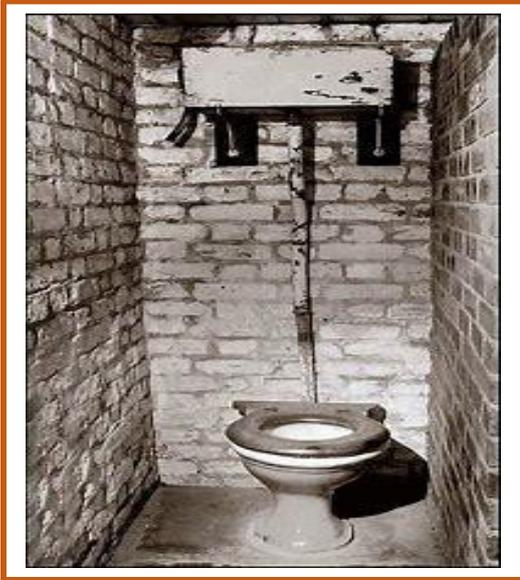
Ever resourceful, they are adept at memorizing the layout of their webs. They know which threads are sticky and which are not, allowing them to move carefully along non-sticky paths. They often tiptoe across their webs, only allowing the tips of their legs to touch the silk.

Legs are covered with tiny hairs called setae, which reduce the surface area that comes into contact with the sticky threads of the web. This minimizes adhesion, allowing spiders to walk across their webs without getting stuck.

So there. Now you know

Arachnophilia Hayes

IMAGES OF YESTERYEAR



NURSERY RHYMES UPDATED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

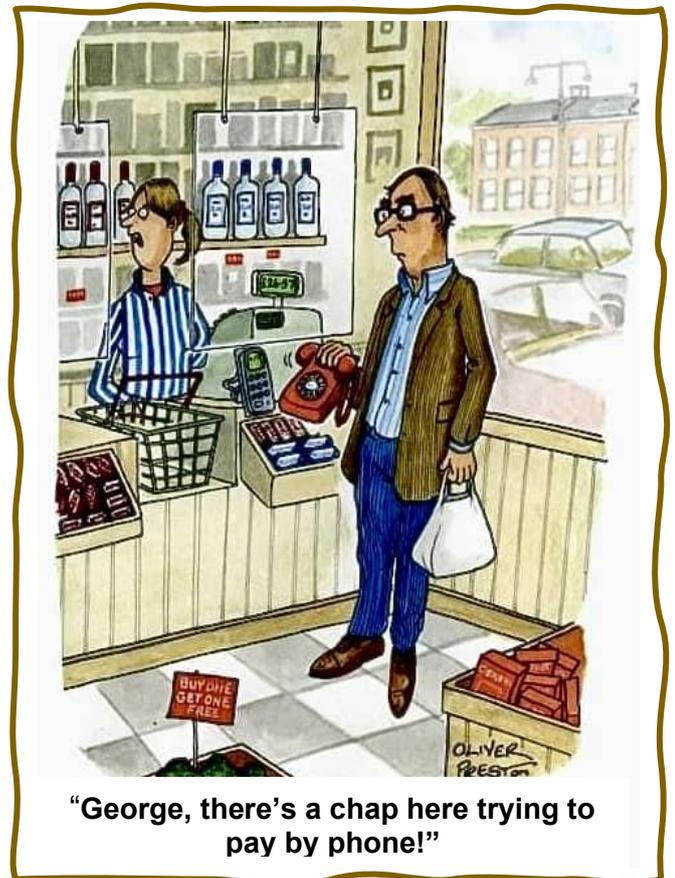
Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
The structure of the wall was incorrect
So he won ten grand with Claims Direct.

It's raining, it's pouring
Of course its global warming.

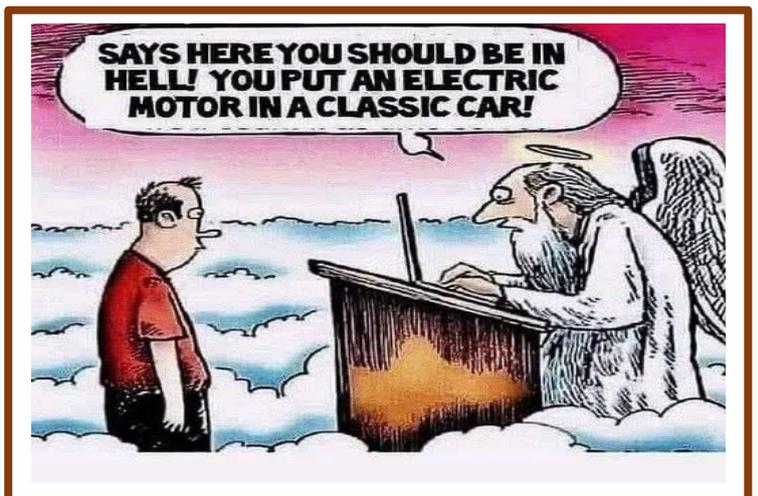
Jack and Jill went into town
To fetch some chips and sweets
Now he can't keep his heart rate down
And she's got diabetes.

Georgie Porgie pudding and pie
Kissed the girls and made them cry
When the boys came out to play
He kissed them too coz he was gay.

Mary had a little lamb
It ran into a pylon
10,000 volts went up it's arse
And turned it's wool to nylon.



“George, there’s a chap here trying to pay by phone!”



SENIOR TRYING TO RESET PASSWORD

WINDOWS: Please enter your new password

USER: cabbage

WINDOWS: Sorry, the password must be more than 8 characters.

USER: boiled cabbage

WINDOWS: Sorry, the password must contain 1 numerical character.

USER: 1 boiled cabbage

WINDOWS: Sorry, the password cannot have blank spaces.

USER: 50damnboiledcabbages

WINDOWS: Sorry, the password must contain at least one upper case character

USER: 50DAMNboiledcabbages

WINDOWS: Sorry, the password cannot use more than one upper case character consecutively.

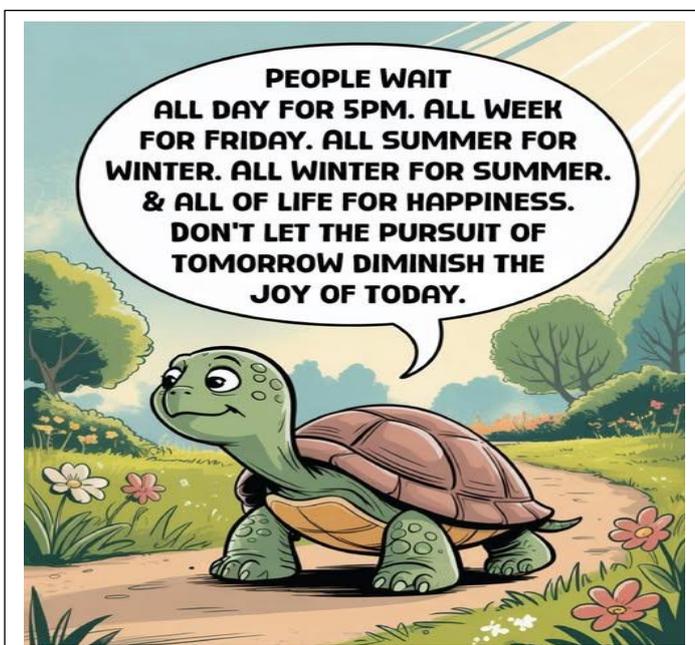
USER: 50damnBoiledCabbagesShovedUpYourAssIfYouDon'tGiveMeAccessNow!

WINDOWS: Sorry, the password cannot contain punctuation.

USER:

ReallyPissedOff50DamnBoiledCabbagesShovedUpYourAssIfYouDontGiveMeAccessNow

WINDOWS: Sorry, that password is already in use.



ANSWERS TO THE GLOSTER AIRPORT QUIZ

- 1: De Haviland DH4a
- 2: De Havilland DH.82A Tiger Moth
- 3: Gloster Gladiator
- 4: DH Venom & English Electric Canberra
- 5: Brantly 305 Helicopter
- 6: Supermarine Spitfire
- 7: Hawker Hurricane
- 8: De Haviland Mosquito
- 9: Handley Page Hastings
and Avro York *Civilian version of Lancaster*
- 10: Lancaster, Spitfire & Hurricane.
Battle of Britain Memorial Flight
- 11: Fairchild Republic A10 Thunderbolt
(Warthog)
- 12: Sud Aviation and the B.A.C Concorde
- 13: Boeing B17 - Flying Fortress
- 14: Armstrong Whitworth AW660 Argosy

Pound shillings and pence

Two farthings would make a ha'penny
two ha'pennies a penny for you
Three pennies would come to threepence
or a threepenny bit as we knew
Six pennies would make up sixpence
two three penny bits did as well
All were known as a tanner
As any old timer would tell
Twelve pennies were worth one shilling
Four threepenny bits two tanners a bob
Four tanners eight threepence two shillings
All would make a florin job
Two and six or a florin and sixpence
Would then become half a crown
Four half crowns made a ten bob note
Two ten bob notes a pound
A pound note and a shilling into a
guinea grew
This is old money pounds shillings and pence
I remember it well do you?



SAY IT ALOUD

Is there more than one cruciverbalist* among our readers? Read on and let's see

The Observer [*a newly revamped Sunday newspaper*] has an intriguing puzzles section, among which is one called a Calypso. In this, we are supplied with the number of letters and a cryptic clue. This week's, which has five letters is "A fruity item relating to Baroness Michelle Mone [she of NHS non sterile gowns fame]

After seeing so many photos of the noble lady, bikini clad, disporting herself on her yacht or modeling one of her trademark bras, I thought "What a pity the answer hasn't got 4 four letters) Because then the solution could have been a homonym, namely "A pear!"

* a would be solver of crossword puzzles



Westons Cider Tour

On the 7th October seven of us joined the 11:00 am tour at Westons Cider to find out more of the inner workings of the cider mill, before we joined twenty-two other members and partners for a very enjoyable lunch in their Scrumpy House Restaurant. Our tour started with a short video, where Helen Weston, the current MD, told us some of the history of the company. Her grandfather, Henry Weston, moved with his family to The Bounds, Much Marcle in 1878 to farm the land and raise Hereford cattle. There were already some cider apple orchards on the farm, and after realising that he could pay a third of his worker's wages in cider he started to brew his own. He soon gained a reputation with other farmers for the quality of his cider, and they supplied him with more apples. Two years later in 1880 he started to produce cider commercially. Tiffany, our tour guide showed us one of the hydraulic presses which were used up to 1996 to extract the juice from the apples and explained how these had been replaced with new vertical presses which were much more efficient. This was a major investment, particularly as the presses are only used for approx. 3 months every year when the apples are harvested. In these 3 months in autumn over 35,000 tons of apples will be used.



We saw how the apples were loaded into large washing tanks from which they are automatically fed to the press. After pressing, the juice is transferred to large vertical stainless steel fermentation tanks, each holding up to 200,000 litres, where the yeast is added. Currently there are approx. 300 of these tanks with more in construction. This is where the liquid is kept until it is needed for the next stage of production. From the fermentation tanks the liquid is transferred to the VAT house where it is matured in oak vats, many of which are over 100 years old. These oak vats range in size from 5,500 gallons to 42,000 gallons, and the liquid remains in these vats for 3 to 18 months, depending on which cider it is being used to make. Up to 12 different forms of liquid are produced at this stage of the process.

The next stage of the process is blending. Different amounts of several of the different forms of liquids are blended with sugar, again in large stainless-steel tanks, to produce the specific cider required. Tiffany explained that currently Westons produce 25 of their own ciders plus a further 25 for supermarkets and other outlets including Jeremy Clarkson's range of ciders. Tiffany explained that before each batch of cider is "signed off" as being correct, the current Head Cider Maker, Guy Weston, Helen's son, has to approve it by tasting a sample.



The final stage of the process is bottling, where several different bottling lines are used, and additionally some ciders are produced in barrels and cartons. The tour concluded with a tasting session where we sampled several Westons ciders ranging in strength from 0 % to 10 %. All were very good and enjoyed by us all.

From humble beginnings in 1880, Westons Cider, still family owned and run, now employs approx. 300 people and has a turnover of £105 million. A real local success story!

The tour was excellent and several of us visited the shop afterwards to purchase some of our favourites.

Kelvin Ashby



Today's cars have too many gadgets...
I put it in reverse and a video came on
with someone getting run over by a car.

**MY DAD SHOWED
ME A 30 MINUTE
POWERPOINT
PRESENTATION ON
WHY ONE SHOULD
ALWAYS WEAR
CONDOM DURING SEX.**

**ALL THE SLIDES WERE
JUST PICTURES OF ME.**



Fairy Swordfish – 1939-1945

A WARTIME ICON REVISITED

Making a welcome return to our speakers list was Mike Aggleton , who many of our longer serving members will remember as someone who rescued our club, among many others, from the Doldrums in the those dark Covid times when live audiences were necessarily non-existent. In those days, Mike, in conjunction with our erstwhile Programme Secretary, Fraser, introduced us to the mysteries of Zoom which meant we could enjoy our speakers whilst sitting at home in our jimjams

This time however we had a flesh and blood Mike, when he gave us a history of the Fairey Swordfish biplane, which normally had a crew of three, comprising a pilot, navigator and rear gunner. It was initially operated primarily as a fleet attack aircraft, but during its later years, the Swordfish was increasingly used for anti-submarine and training duties. It was also known affectionally as the Stringbag, not because it was seemingly held together by that material but because of its perceived resemblance to a lady's shopping bag (of the time) regarding the amount of stuff it could carry.

The primary weapon of the Swordfish was the torpedo, but the low speed of the aircraft and the need for a long straight approach made it difficult to attack well-defended targets. The Swordfish was also be used as a dive-bomber. The planes took part in many WW2 battles, principally at Narvik (Norway), Malta, Bone (Algeria) and Taranto (Italy).

It was during the battle of the latter that the Japanese assistant naval attaché to Berlin, Takeshi Naito, visited Taranto to view the consequences of the attack; he later briefed the staff who planned the attack on Pearl Harbor. In a way therefore, one might say America's ally contributed to the rout of a large part of the American fleet.

The plane's versatility was demonstrated during a German naval movement known as the Channel Dash. Six Swordfish led by Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde flew from Manston to intercept two battleships as they traversed the English Channel towards Germany. When the Swordfish formation began their attack run, the Swordfish were intercepted by about 15 German Messerschmitt aircraft; the fight was extremely one-sided, quickly resulting in the loss of all Swordfish while no damage was inflicted upon the ships themselves. The lack of fighter cover was a contributing factor for the heavy losses; only 10 of 84 promised fighters were available. Thirteen of the 18 Swordfish crew involved were killed. Esmonde, who had previously led an attack on *Bismarck*, was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously. The courage of the Swordfish crews was noted by commanders on both sides.

Members were left marvelling at the courage of the pilots who flew these planes (One in particular was Mike's father) without whom and their contemporaries, it was unlikely that members would be here and Mike received an ovation worthy of their feats.

Peter Hayes

NEWENT IN ART



OUT AND ABOUT IN NEWENT AND BEYOND
an occasional series of places to see and things to do.

SHAMBLES, NOT SHAMBOLIC

Tucked away in a corner of Newent is the Shambles; its unprepossessing exterior hiding a variety of tiny, quirky, offbeat – call it what you will – businesses.

Among the cafes, tattooists and even a museum, you will find aptly named Secret Gallery, hidden away in a cobbled courtyard.

Readers with long memories will recall that the Shambles once housed just a living museum to late 17th / early 18thC living. With many of the exhibits and fittings donated by Newent residents including furniture and artifacts that came from actual Newent homes, it attracted many visitors from near and far.

According to dictionaries, the term *Shambles* originally meant a slaughterhouse and it gradually came to mean *a place of confusion*. Thinking about it, it is easy to see how one term led to another with fearful animals perhaps seeking to evade their fate

But we digress: The **Secret Gallery** calls.

Seated perhaps incongruously, cheek by jowl with its offbeat neighbours, the Art Gallery and art space is set over two floors, with regular exhibitions by local established artists, it reflects the owners' love of all things creative.

Hannah's downstairs gift shop is full of unique cards, handmade gifts, prints, jewellery and artwork by established local artists and makers. The gallery also boasts a beautiful Exhibition and Art-Space, dubbed '*The Upstairs Space*' where you can come and enjoy a different exhibition every month., making for a lovely surround for all the creative workshops and events which are held there. There is much to love about this little gallery, hidden away in the quirky courtyard of The Shambles in Newent which always welcomes new faces.

The dreaded C word looms so, whether you are looking for a small gift, a large piece of Investment Art, or would simply like to connect with other creative folk... pop by and say hello to any or even all of the many artists, creative workshops, events and a lovely gift shop full of unique hand-made gifts.

Our roving nonagenarian



Miscarriages of Justice

Presentation by John Weeden CB

John commenced his excellent talk by explaining the role of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) in the Justice system and his place in this body. He commented that over the years there had been a number of cases of the miscarriage of Justice, including such cases as Timothy Evans who was hanged for a murder that he did not commit and the Birmingham Six who were wrongly convicted for the Birmingham pub bombings in the 1970's. However, there was no statutory body who could look into controversial cases where there may be reason to doubt a conviction following any rejection of a plea to the Appeal Court. As a result, at the end of the last century an Act of Parliament was passed in 1997 to bring into being the Criminal Cases Review Commission. This was set up in Birmingham as an independent body and John joined them in 2002 after a career as a solicitor and as head of the Legal Department of the Royal Air Force.

The CCRC was charged with looking into cases where there was a possibility that a miscarriage of Justice may have occurred due to a number of reasons set out in the Act. CCRC was charged with following up these cases and, if there was good reason, passing any cases where there was a real possibility that a conviction may be incorrect, to pass them onto the Court of Appeal. In 2023 the CCRC investigated 1424 such applications for an appeal of which 25 were referred to the Appeal Court, resulting in 17 convictions being quashed.

John first commented upon the case of Timothy Evans many years before the CCRC came into existence. Timothy was convicted and hanged for a murder at 10 Rillington Place. Sometime afterwards, it came to light that, although Timothy had admitted to the killing, it was actually committed by John Christy who lived at 10 Rillington Place and who was a serial murderer and later confessed to the killings including that for which Timothy was convicted. Another murder was that perpetrated by James Hanratty, which became known as the A6 murder. During the Police investigation of which, a number of people were considered as possibly guilty. However in the event the evidence pointed to James Hanratty and at his trial he given a verdict of guilty. He appealed but the verdict was upheld and he was hanged for the murder.

John then spoke about some of the cases with which he became involved during his work until he left the service in 2012.

The multiple murders in Essex at White House Farm in 1985 was a very complex affair with the murders of five members of the same family. The Farmer Neville and his wife June, together with their daughter Sheila and her two young children were murdered. At first Sheila was accused as her adopted brother, Jeremy, claimed to be out of the house at the time of the murders. However, Jeremy was charged with and convicted of their murders but after failing his appeal the case was considered by the CCRC. Nevertheless the CCRC studies into the murders found no evidence to substantiate Jeremy's claim and his conviction stood.

The final case John looked at was the murder of Jill Dando in 1999 when she was shot on her doorstep. Many local people gave evidence to the police and a number of people were accused of being involved but no arrest was made for many months. In the end Barry George was charged and convicted at a trial during 2000, over 12 months after Jill's murder. In the event Barry made an appeal against his conviction which was upheld and the conviction was quashed. More recent investigations about the evidence showed that crucial evidence about the gun used and the residues from the ammunition found on Barry's clothing was liable to be unsafe and the murder remains unsolved. The talk proved to be a fascinating insight into some of the most widely publicised murders and the number of questions at the end of the talk was evidence of a presentation much appreciated by our members.

David Clowes

BEAR THIS IN MIND

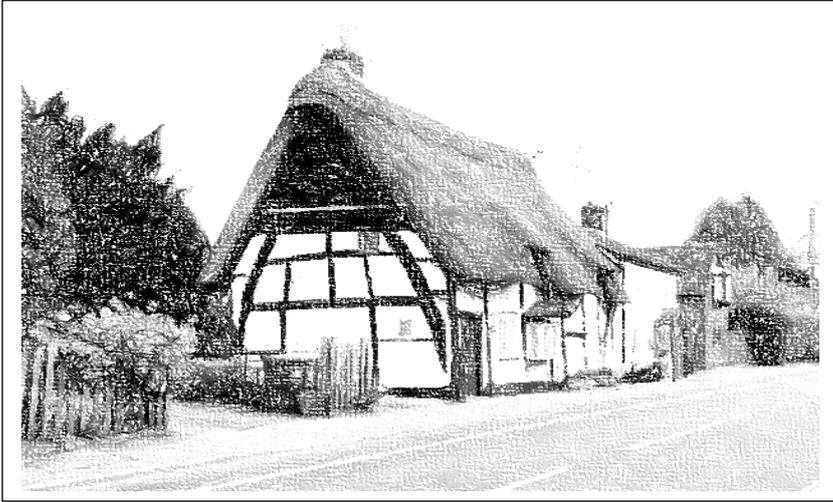


Not a lot of people know this!

I only found this after watching a programme on TV..

Ancient Greek for "Bear" is "Arktos" and Polar Bears are found in the north – "The Arctic". Whereas...there are no bears at the South Pole and Ancient Greek for "None" is "Ant" so no bears "Antarctic"

It appears it would be a disaster if you moved Polar Bears to the Antarctic. As part of their yearly routine, they like to frolic in the meadows. There are no meadows in Antarctica.



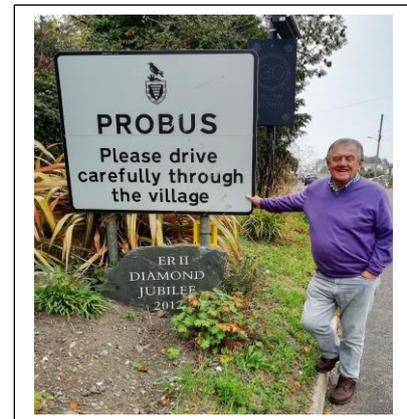
Where am I?



What's this?

**Thanks to all those who
submitted articles and assisted
with production.**

Ed



**Can I remind readers that the Newsletter is for the enjoyment and
information of Newent Probus Club members & partners and
should not be reproduced or passed to third parties**