

NEWENT AND DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

This is my last message to you as chairman in a year that seems to have flown by. It is gratifying to see how the club has grown with many new members joining us together with well attended social events.

We had a very successful summer party followed in December by a well-received Christmas lunch. With thanks to Paul in particular, the pub lunches have also been a great success. The quiz and skittles evenings were well attended and my thanks go to Fraser and John as the respective organisers. I would like to thank Ray for his work on the Club Website and all members of the committee for their work for the club over the year and for the support they have given me. In particular, I am grateful to Kelvin who has been a very effective secretary and kept me in order. Once again, the newsletter has helped to keep us in touch, all the better for the contributions from members. I can tell you that our finances are in good order. I am sure we can all agree that Fraser arranged a good spread of interesting speakers, and he even managed to spend below the budget we gave him. It was pleasing to have several of our members contribute to this and we would welcome other members who wish to do so. If I have one regret it is that I failed miserably in my plan to improve the quality of the jokes offered at the end of each meeting. Fortunately, Nigel has assured me that he will endeavour to correct this. My thanks to all of you for your support throughout the year and my best wishes to Nigel as he takes over as chairman.

Mike

PUB LUNCH



What 3 words: thus.emeralds.courier

TUESDAY 7 APRIL
“DUKE OF YORK”
Tewkesbury Road
Berrow
WR13 6JQ

HERALDRY



14 APRIL
John Bromley
“Understanding Heraldry”

Heraldry (also known as **armory**) is a discipline relating to the design, display, study and transmission of armorial bearings. A full heraldic achievement may include a coat of arms on a shield, helmet and crest, together with accompanying devices, such as supporters, badges, heraldic banners and mottoes. Heraldic achievements are formally described in a blazon.

49TH AGM

TUESDAY 28 APRIL

Including a game of “CALL MY BLUFF” featuring
your very own members

OFFICER NOMINATIONS 2026 - 2027

CHAIRMAN:	Nigel Johnson
VICE CHAIRMAN:	John Weeden
SECRETARY:	Kelvin Ashby
TREASURER:	Mike Warburton

COMMITTEE

PROGRAMME SECRETARY:	Fraser Gunn
EVENTS ORGANISER:	Stephen Wheeler
WEBMASTER:	Ray McCairn
COMMITTEE MEMBER:	Mike Townsend

ASSOCIATED APPOINTMENTS

LUNCHES:	Paul Dodd
TECHNICAL SUPPORT:	John Franklin
TECHNICAL SUPPORT:	Mike Townsend
TECHNICAL SUPPORT:	Paul Holyhead
ASSISTANT TREASURER:	Graham Baum
RAFFLE ORGANISER:	Chris Lathan
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Fraser Gunn

English is what happens when the Vikings learn Latin and use it to shout at Germans and then the French shout back.

FOR READING ADDICTS

Boss to employee: "Do you believe in life after death?"

Employee: "Certainly not, there's no proof of it"

Boss: Well there is now... After you left early yesterday for your uncle's funeral, he came here looking for you"!

🤪👴 An elderly lady stood at the cruise ship railing, holding her hat so it wouldn't blow away. A gentleman politely said, "Excuse me, ma'am... did you know your dress is blowing up in the wind?"

"Yes, I know," she replied. "I need both hands to hold my hat!" He added, "But ma'am... you're not wearing any underwear, and everything is exposed!"

She looked down, then back at him and said, "Sir... anything you see down there is 75 years old. I just bought this hat yesterday!" 🤪👴



When you are stressed, you eat cakes, chocolates and sweets. Why? Because "**Stressed**" spelled backwards is "**Desserts**"

After 3 months, I finally decided to report my stolen credit card. The Police asked me why I waited 3 months to report it.

I told them the thief was spending less than my wife!



Winston Churchill loved **PARAPROSDOKIANS**, a figure of speech in which the latter part of the sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected.

1. Where there's a Will, I want to be in it
2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you, but it's still on my list.
3. Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
5. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
6. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
7. They begin the evening news with 'Good Evening,' then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
8. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
9. In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of emergency, notify:' I put "DOCTOR."
10. I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

DO YOU REMEMBER. . . .

When if someone asked you how you were, a single word answer sufficed

When the only tablet that you ever took was a solitary Aspirin

When your shoes had laces in them

When you took eight hours sleep a night for granted

When "touch your toes" was an invitation rather than an impossibility

When a phone was a black Bakelite object that stayed in the hall, rather than something that lived in your pocket and with which you took photos

When you got up from your chair to switch the TV on and off

When you wore an overcoat in your car in order to keep warm

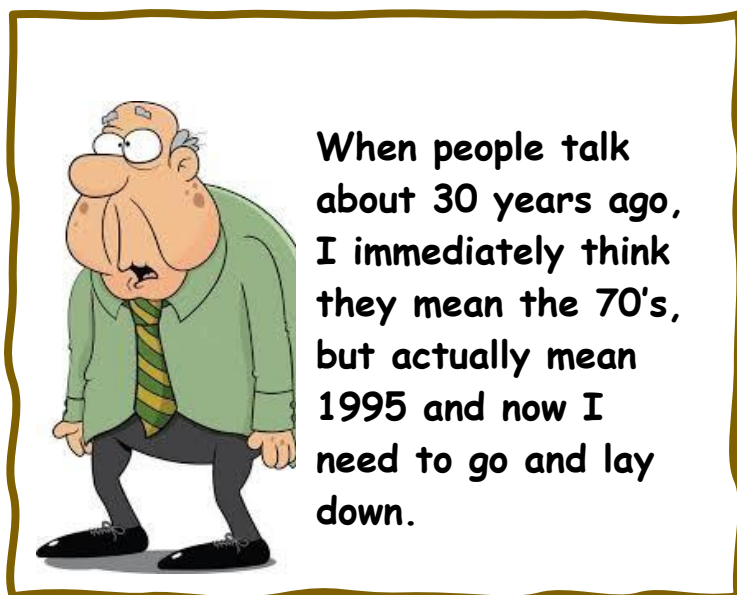
When a car journey without a breakdown was an achievement rather than the norm

When all of your clothes fitted

When you were two inches taller than you are now

When you didn't need a motorised ejector seat to get out of your favourite armchair

Damned If I do - they were too long ago!! What was the question?



Blood transfusion

I asked my blonde neighbour how she lost her husband Johnny. She told me her sad story.

"Well, he needed a blood transfusion, but his blood type was not on his records, so the doctors asked me if I knew what it was, as they urgently needed to know in order to save my Johnny's life.

Tragically, I've never known his blood type, so I only had time to sit and say goodbye.

I'll never forget how supportive he was. Even as he was fading away, he kept on whispering to me, "*Be positive, be positive!*"

That was my Johnny, always thinking of others"



PETER HINES

It is always sad to have a member leave us, particularly one who has served us so long and well as Peter Hines but he has decided to move to pastures new near Stratford upon Avon. After giving it a good trial, he found the commute to meetings a bit much, so, reluctantly, we bid him farewell with our best wishes for the future.

Peter is our longest serving member, joining us in 2001. He had two separate stints as Club Secretary and he also served variously as Theatre Visits Organiser, Programme Secretary and Pub Lunch Organiser for many years. He also founded the ever-popular Newsletter which, in those far off days, was paper based and required physically distributing among members.

Like so many of our members, Peter has a fascinating back story:

His family escaped from Nazi controlled Austria in the nick of time, avoiding the Auschwitz fate of so many of their compatriots. As a refugee in his adoptive country of England, a new name beckoned for Peter's father. An unimaginative immigration administrator replaced his unpronounceable surname Czeczewijca with an anglicised spelling of his forename, so Heinz Czeczewijca became Henry Hines! much to Peter's subsequent relief.

Peter would proudly say that he isn't the man he started as; he was saved from the effects of Kidney failure and long sessions on a dialysis machine by a donation of a new kidney by a close friend which, has stood him in good stead for many years now.

We wish him and his new body part the very best of luck and it goes without saying that we would all be pleased to see him if and when he should be in the area.

PS: Peter will be joining us as our guest at our Pub lunch on 7 April at the Duke of York, Berrow.

So come along enjoy a good meal and company and say farewell to Peter

OUT AND ABOUT IN NEWENT

“An occasional series on who’s who and what’s new in Newent”

There’s an element of David versus Goliath in the latest bit of retail therapy in the Shambles, that quirky piece of Newent that holds so many unexpected treasures, now that bibliophile **Holly Palmer** has opened her bookshop **Toadstool Books**.



After many years in the retail game and herself an (as yet) unpublished author, fulfilled a lifelong ambition, when the chance came to secure a vacant shop, she snapped it up and today it is a well-stocked, welcoming place.

Now, after just a few months. Holly has seen her customer base and sales grow with steady if not spectacular. “But, after all”, she told The Newsletter, “Jeff Bezos (he of Amazon fame), started in a tiny garage and look at him now”?

As befitting a bookseller, she speaks volumes for her trade and she is a mine of information on the latest titles and not only the top 20 sellers. In her small but immaculate shop there is a wide selection of both adult and children's books, fiction and non-fiction. There is also a small selection of used books, competitively priced to suit all tastes, plus there is a range of art products and quirky gifts and stocking fillers. Holly has many plans for the future. Perhaps a local author or two will give readings there or, who knows, maybe a book signing? Please pop in, have a browse and say Hello Holly. You might find something there that you didn't know you wanted. Her opening hours are Wednesdays and Thursdays 10-2 and Friday and Saturday 10-4



Peter Hayes

Building Community Radio Stations in Liberia



On Tuesday 24th February Brian Barber gave us a fascinating presentation of his experiences in West Africa.

Brian has a history of working as an aid worker, particularly in Africa. Many of the areas in which he has worked turned out to be war zones.

Between 2003 – 2007 he was in Liberia building community radio stations as part of a U S aid programme. These were largely in isolated areas throughout the country.

Brian's role was to assemble the hardware and personnel to construct the radio stations for use by the local population. Construction depended on finding technically minded people locally - a fairly haphazard task. Finance was largely supplied by the U.S.

Liberia was founded by James Monroe - U. S. president 1817 – 1825. It is a coastal state in West Africa, capital Monrovia. The country is 111,370 square km, (England 130,300 square km) and has a population of 5.3 million. Economy: rubber, mining, timber and provision of a flag of convenience for shipping.

Charles Taylor was president from 1997 – 2003, a time of widespread corruption and civil war. This included kidnapping of young children to fight in the rebel armies. Following his deposition Taylor was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to 50 years imprisonment. Dictatorial in style, Taylor had control of the country's airwaves and used them for his own propaganda. This made Brian's work seem suspicious to the president and he was accused of being in the CIA and attracted two secret police to monitor his activities. Sometimes he had to rely on protection in the ghettos of the country, to escape personal danger.

The community radio stations were set up as public broadcasters to spread both local news and, for instance, agricultural, health and welfare information. Radio type 'soaps' were also used for this purpose. Broadcasts were in a combination of English and local dialects. At that time surfaced roads were nearly non-existent so a vehicle mechanic was usually among the personnel. Parts for the stations had to be obtained, transported and assembled; power being provided by small generators and some solar and wind generation, to allow up to 12 hours broadcasting.

Brian's achievements were impressive given the corruption, civil war and general lawlessness. By 2007 his teams had set up over 50 radio stations which were accessed by 100,000 solar/wind up radios that had been supplied to the population.

He remains sanguine and sceptical about various organisations there to help, but his determination to complete the job and make a difference in the face of numerous challenges is remarkable.

Paul Crockett

I have been in many places ...but I've never been in:

1. Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.

2. also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognises you there.

3. I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there.

4. I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

5. I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go and I try not to visit too often.

6. I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

7. Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

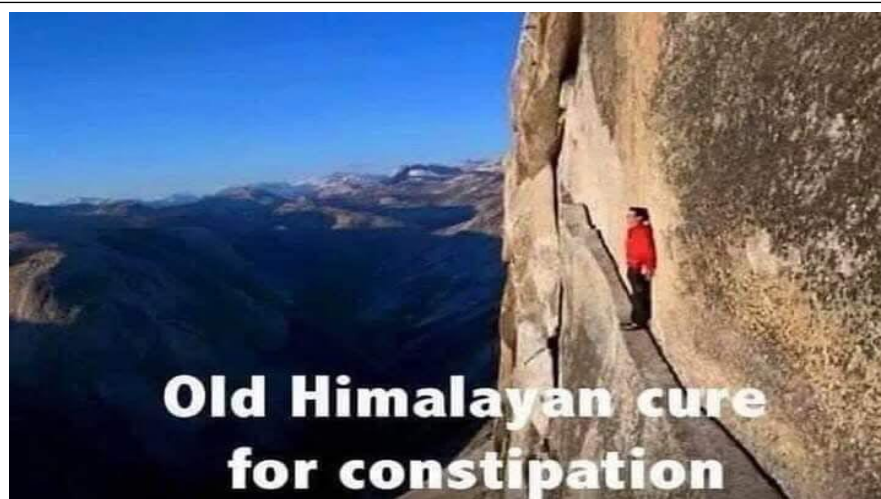
8. I like to be in Suspense! It really gets the adrenaline flowing and pumps up the old heart!

9. And, sometimes I think I am in Vincible but life shows me I am not!

10. People keep telling me I'm in Denial but I'm positive I've never been there before!

11. I have been in Deepshit many times; the older I get, the easier it is to get there.

12. So far, I haven't been in Continent, but my travel agent says it is on the list.



**Old Himalayan cure
for constipation**

DAFFODILS GLADDENED OUR WAY



Our monthly pub lunches go from strength to strength and this month was no exception. Under the genial organisation of Stephen Wheeler, to whom a hearty vote of thanks was given at the conclusion of several calorie defying meals, the Kilcot Inn was our venue. Members were encouraged by the early signs of Spring with the sight of both the natural and cultivated variety of daffodils along the grass verges en route. The Kilcot is a popular choice among members, both for our formal get together and when members decide to have a family do. Situated as it is just a couple of miles outside Newent it has all the attraction of going somewhere in the country, without having to drive to the ends of the Earth. Although to be honest, some members did travel a fair distance to join us at the venue and the organiser appreciated the fact that the effort was made.

Nearly 30 of us sat down to an informal seating plan; just find a vacant chair and plonk yourself down and indulge yourself in some good chat with your neighbour. The “Kilcot pies” are always a popular choice and this time it was no exception with a good third of those present opting for the steak and ale variety. Closely followed by the perennial favourite the good old fish and chips. Puds abound, with the selection on offer making a choice difficult.

After what seemed a long time after the now empty dishes were cleared away, the chat continued but there was no rush for the pub to close. Eventually however, we all drifted away, maybe our wallets lighter but our tummies fuller.

We are all looking forward to the next lunch and if you have yet to try one, why not resolve to break your duck with the April one. Just give your name to the organiser and make a menu choice. Be warned it could become a habit.

Our galloping gourmet

SS UGANDA and the Falklands War

On 10th March Zak Coombs gave a fascinating talk about the SS Uganda, her role as an educational cruise ship and her time as a hospital ship when requisitioned for the Falklands war in 1982

Zak himself was Assistant Purser when she was "STUFT" (Ships Taken Up From Trade) to act as a hospital ship. He remained on board throughout the conflict, acting as a stretcher bearer and ward orderly and he described his experiences, helping to bring aboard severely injured soldiers, both British and Argentinian, for triage and treatment in the ship's operating theatres



The SS Uganda, built in Glasgow, was delivered to the British India Steam Navigation Company in 1952. She was intended as a passenger cargo ship for the UK – East Africa run and continued in this role until that trade diminished and she was converted in 1967 to an educational cruise ship.



These cruises, from the UK to the Mediterranean in the winter months and to Scandinavia in summer, provided accommodation for up to 1,000 students and their teachers. Dormitories were created for the students in her former cargo holds, together with their own lounge areas and rooms where they could study

In April 1982 she was cruising in the Mediterranean when the Falklands war began, and whilst visiting Alexandria she received orders to sail immediately to Naples to discharge her passengers and then to proceed to Gibraltar to be re-fitted as a hospital ship.



On 16th April 1982 she entered dry-dock in Gibraltar where she was transformed to a hospital ship in just 68 hours. The roof of the student's common room was reinforced with a forest of pillars to support the weight of a helicopter landing deck, ramps were added to transfer casualties to the lower decks, fully equipped operating theatres were installed and equipment for refuelling at sea (RAS) was added. This incredible transformation, in such a short timescale was achieved, Zak told us, by shipyard staff who had just been served with redundancy notices!

After a brief stop at Ascension Island and a rendezvous with the rest of the fleet she sailed as a fully equipped NOSH (Naval Ocean-going Surgical Hospital) codenamed 'Mother Hen' with 135 medical staff from Portsmouth, and most of the original crew members, including Zak. From 1st May 1982 she was stationed off shore from the Falkland Islands and the first casualties arrived on 12th May from HMS Sheffield, which had been hit by an Exocet missile. During the conflict casualties were ferried from the islands by helicopter or the smaller 'ambulance ships', and despite some 'near misses' she was not damaged during the war. Many of the injured suffered lower limb injuries resulting from mines and there were many amputations. Other injuries included 'penetration wounds', burns and trench foot.

During the conflict, after their initial treatment by casualty stations ashore, the SS Uganda received 730 casualties, including 150 Argentinians. In total, 504 surgical operations were performed.

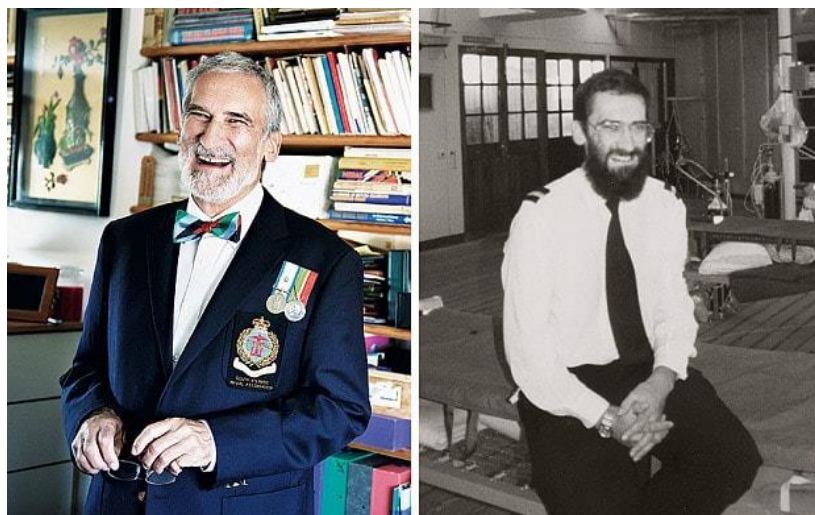
Sadly, 3 deaths were recorded on board the Uganda:

Private R J Absolon. 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment

Corporal S Hope 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment

Royal Marine P D Callan. 45 Commando.

The SS Uganda ceased to be designated as a hospital ship on 13th July 1982 and returned to Southampton on 9th August. She had been at sea for 113 days, travelling nearly 23,000 miles. Zak was awarded the South Atlantic Medal for his service in the Falklands war.



Graham Mawdsley

Post Script



Smith's Ship repairers of North Shields extensively refitted *Uganda*, but her games deck windows never did close properly again after having Sea King helicopters landing on her quois court.

She returned to educational cruising on 25 September 1982

But in November, she was chartered for two years to serve as a store ship between Ascension Island and the Falkland Islands.

She was fitted with a new helicopter deck and on 14 January 1983 left Southampton for the Falklands again.

Uganda was refitted again at Falmouth in November 1983. She completed her charter in 1985, reached Falmouth on 25 April 1985 and was laid up in the River Fal on 4 May 1985.

On 29 April 1986 the Triton Shipping Company of St Vincent bought *Uganda* and renamed her *Triton*. With a crew of 21 she left the Fal on 20 May and anchored off Kaohsiung in Taiwan on 15 July to await breaking.

On 22 August "Typhoon Wayne" drove her ashore. She was still ashore on her side in March 1992, but has since been broken up.





The speaker for our meeting on the 24th March was Steve Bryce from the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) an organisation working with industry to improve best practice in reducing pollutants entering and affecting the seas and oceans. Steve has been with the MCS for four years and his role has been promoting the organisation and campaigning to encourage new members and volunteers. This normally means him working through schools and other organisations involving young people. The format for his presentation is geared towards youngsters and so he rearranged his talk to suit those of us over 35 years of age.

He began by explaining to us the importance of clean and healthy oceans as they are capable of absorbing a third of all Carbon Dioxide emissions and producing 50% of Oxygen. They therefore have great influence on reducing atmospheric and sea temperatures. All land-based pollutants ultimately end up in the sea be it via rivers, drains and sewers. So far so good, but then members started asking questions and the meeting became less of a presentation and more of a question-and-answer session. This resulted in a diverse and interesting discussion but a difficult one to produce a report on. However, Steve did keep pulling us back to the main topics within his talk.

There are many different types and sources of pollutants, the most obvious and visible one being plastics. Some 8 to 14 million tonnes of plastic enter the oceans every year and over time this breaks down into micro plastics which sink to the sea bed. There they severely impact the marine life. The floating plastic together with discarded fishing tackle is an enormous problem for the fish population and mammals. Other serious pollutants are discharged raw sewage, pharmaceuticals, agricultural run-off, domestic chemicals together with many industrial chemicals. The PFA group of chemicals used on waterproof clothing and Teflon for example are particularly damaging. These all enter the sea via rivers and have resulted in the UK coast loosing 90% of its sea grass including where it has been replanted. This all affects sea-life and the fish we trawl or farm in the seas and oceans.

Ultimately pollutants are taken up through the food chain and so we end up ingesting those same pollutants. Consumer choice affects supermarkets and both Waitrose and Morrisons work with the MCS to sell sustainably produced stock. Steve wound up by running through the activities the MCS organise such as beach cleaning, campaigning and fund raising. The meeting could have continued but the Chair called a halt as time was getting on.

An excellent, wide ranging and interesting meeting in which we all learned something new.

Andrew Graham



Chris sent this writing it in a coach as they were crossing the Atacama Desert!

Last report I sent was from Montevideo. Tonight, we are in Iquique, Chile. We have visited the Falklands, seen penguins, The Falklands war memorials and felt at home walking down the Main Street "Ross Road".

The Falklands War memorials and felt at home walking down the Main Street "Ross Road". We then went to South Shetland islands, off the tip of Antarctica, following in Shackleton's footsteps, cruising past Elephant Island, St George's and the volcanic Island of Deception with a penguin colony of 100,000 birds. Along the peninsula we saw hundreds of Humpback whales, add in lots of ice caps glaciers and huge icebergs, our 4 Antarctic cruising days were over.



We then crossed Drake passage to round the infamous Cape Horn. It has a ferocious reputation, but was a millpond for us. Then up Beagle passage and Glacier alley from Darwin ice cap to the end of the world - Ponta Arenas and a trip across Chilian Patagonia to see a colony of Condors.

Then moving to Valparaíso a city on the Chilian coast for a trip around it. The seas here were rich with whales and sea birds and seals particularly the Magellan straits and the Chilian fiords. At Coquimbo, Chile we had a trip to the Andes foothills (Chili is only 110 miles wide at the most, so the Andes are never far away) There were vineyards at 2000mts along a valley full of veg and fruit some grown on old Inca terraces.



The crops are dependent on irrigation, as the valley sides are basically desert with cactus growing all over. Then we came to Iquique and am now back from our trip across the Atacama we touched 4100m into Andes highlands on the Bolivian border to visit a salt flat with flocks of three types of flamingos. Most of us suffered from altitude sickness and chewed on coca leaves to help.

Anyway, bye for now, back at sea, on our way to Peru.



Location?



Historical Significance?

May your troubles be less, your blessings be more, and nothing but happiness come through your door.

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