

NEWENT AND DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2026

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

'Flaming June' has arrived earlier this year with the highest ever May temperature recorded on the late May bank holiday Monday, only for that record to be broken the next day.

After a wet winter and so-so spring weather the heatwave is quite a surprise. Let's hope it lasts (not quite as intensively) for our Summer Party on 28 July. If so, sun shade umbrellas or gazebos will be needed. A reminder also that donations for the raffle will be very welcome.

Thinking of June, it is a month when many events and festivals take place in our region, taking advantage of the better weather before families go away for the summer holidays. Locally the Linton Festival takes place 19 to 21 June with both tribute bands (for nostalgia) and bands and artists with original music to many tastes – as well as many real ales and ciders brewed locally. Sadly after 25 years or so this summer's festival will be the last. A fantastic achievement from modest beginnings that has raised thousands for charity.

Slightly further afield and somewhat of a contrast is the Royal Three Counties Show in Malvern from 12 to 14 June.

The event is now the largest livestock and equine show in England, featuring over 6,000 animals and various activities celebrating rural life. I have been regularly attending for 40 or more years and recall when it was a mid-week event more directly focused on the farming and agribusiness world. It now has a wider countryside focus and is ever more popular.

These events are just two examples of how fortunate we are that in our locality and region there are those who, largely through volunteer effort and commitment, provide events and activities that lift our spirits in otherwise trying times.

Nigel

PUB LUNCH



The New Dawn Inn
Old Tewkesbury Road
Norton, Gloucester
GL2 9LR

TUESDAY 2 JUNE



Mine Host: *Stephen Wheeler*

What3Words
[idea.postage.trespass](https://www.what3words.com/idea.postage.trespass)

TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2026

Speaker: SUE HICKMAN

"PILLS, PEOPLE AND POLLUTION"

Today, pharmaceutical pollution is becoming a major environmental issue, as drug residues are showing up in rivers, lakes, and groundwater around the globe. Active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), the biologically active compounds in medicines, have now been found in water systems on every continent

TUESDAY 23 JUNE 2026

Speaker: ANDY MELLOR

"The Glosters at Waterloo"



At the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the 28th (North Gloucestershire) Regiment of Foot, a predecessor to the Gloucestershire Regiment ("Glosters"), played a critical role in the British defensive line. They famously formed a square near the crossroads of Mont-Saint-Jean to resist relentless French cavalry charges throughout the day



THE MOON SHONE ON US

The fascinatingly named pub, The Moon, just across the border in Mordiford, is one of those pubs, which having passed by scores of times, makes people say "I must visit one day". The day, thanks to the aplomb that our tam meals organiser Paul, brings us to our regular monthly lunches, dawned this month when a score of us and more, descended on the hostelry. Located as it is in the picturesque village of Mordiford, which bestrides the banks of the river Lugg, which is crossed by the oldest surviving bridge in Herefordshire, dating in part to c.1352 and completed in the 16th century. While the Moon is a comfortable half-timbered two bar roadside village inn, that started life as a farmhouse over 400 years ago. Popular with locals and with families tripping out of Hereford or even further afield, it benefits from its proximity to the Mordiford Loop – a well-known local walk.

"Small plates" is a little used concept at the Moon; instead, there were platters in calorie busting proportions. All the usual favourites were there, including a pie where the taste of the pastry rivelled its contents, Pork Belly with oh so crackling and my choice the "Fisherman's Net", comprising a variety of fishes, some I swear Mine Host Karen must have had her net in the Lugg since dawn while she caught them.

A word of warning on the dessert menu. Don't even think about looking at it unless you have the willpower of a saint, which I cannot claim I have not. Thanks to the choice on offer, I weakened and paved yet another few steps of that road of good intentions to Hell with a mountainous cheesecake. Post tea/coffee almost subsumed into afternoon tea with the ever-tolerant host in no hurry for us to vacate which was doubly creditable as she had opened especially for us that day, so thanks to her and her staff for looking after us so well plus not forgetting our own Paul Dodd who arranged the whole event.

To those who have never tasted the joys of a "Probus Lunch"; I say again, come and join us. No mystique involved, just give your name to the organiser when the venue is announced and enjoy.

The Galloping Gourmet



After the difficult Covid period, when the pub sadly lost much of its staff, landlord Alan was determined to restore the warm atmosphere and reputation the pub was known for. With optimism and determination, he put up this inspiring sign: "We are back and looking forward to welcoming you by serving top quality food." I think you'll agree — it certainly did the trick

An introduction to Philately

BY JANET & NICK NELSON

A most interesting talk on the subject of the Postage Stamp was given by Nick and Janet Nelson of Ross on Wye.

Nick introduced himself a member of the Royal Philatelic Society and commented that he shared collecting stamps at the age of 7 and his father and grandfather, who were themselves collectors at that time. He was supported by his wife Janet with whom he shares his interest in all philatelic matters.

They commenced their presentation talk by showing the first stamp, the Penny Black, which was brought into being by the Government with the introduction of a radically modernised postal service in 1840.



Prior to this, the expensive post was paid for by the recipient of the letter and was beyond the cost for much of the population. The introduction of the pre-paid Penny Black Postage stamp letter for nearly all letters was a huge reduction in the cost of the service. It was reported that within a few months the number of letters being sent had risen by over 10 times. It soon produced a revolution of communications between all people and heralded a major change in the society of the day.

The stamp cost was only 1 penny and brought itself many security details that we all now take for granted. It had a portrait of the monarch, the young Queen Victoria, and introduced detailed patterns engraved on the stamp, which successfully made forgery of the stamps very difficult. Initially over 63 million stamps were issued but these were soon used up and were followed by many other issues soon afterwards. It should be noted that the same portrait of the Queen remained in use until the end of her reign on all stamps, and there was no major forgery of the Penny Black design of stamp, showing the value of the detailed patterns used for the stamps.

The second country to introduce a similarly inexpensive pre-paid postal service was Brazil in 1843.



After that, the system rapidly spread throughout the world. One notable early adopter of the system was in Switzerland, where a double stamp was introduced with one stamp being used for local areas in cities and a double stamp for longer distant items. Some of these early stamps are now rare to come by, but most stamps remain well within the price of collector's pockets.



The talk then moved onto the development of special services including air mail and special additions for major events such as Olympics and World congresses. These inevitably had special stamps used for the duration of the event itself. He noted that after the first World War the introduction of airships, and particularly the German Zeppelins, were used to speed up international letters. This made regular secure intercontinental communications to be swiftly delivered, well before the introduction of modern electronic systems. He showed a copy of an example of a letter sent from Germany to USA by Zeppelin in the 1930's. This enabled a reply to be sent back, sometimes on the same airship, within a few days. Also, air mail was used in countries where the geography made land-based travel difficult or dangerous. This was particularly valuable in mountainous areas of the world. These services almost inevitably had special stamps or envelopes, and some such items were produced in tiny numbers. Occasionally, these are proving very valuable when they come up for Auction.

In recent years many changes have been introduced to enhance the security of stamps. One of the most obvious in recent years in the UK is the smart QR code printed with each stamp. These all have a unique number for each individual stamp, so that it is possible to check if any particular stamp has already been used and cannot be used twice! Also patterns of different phosphorescent inks can be added and used to trace particular items within the postal system.



Finally, they noted the availability of catalogues, such as the well-known Stanley Gibbons documents which assist in the identification of stamps for collectors. Many countries have introduced their own lists for their own stamps. Nick also mentioned the various magazines and societies devoted to Philately, and encouraged anyone who wished to contact relevant associations

Following the talk there were many questions, including the value of stamp collections. Sadly, Nick had to report that stamp collecting had become less popular in recent years, and only very rare examples are of significant value. Your stamp collections are likely to be of more happy memories than investment treasures. Nevertheless, his talk brought many memories back to us all.

David Clowes

Oenophile at Large

What on earth is an oenophile? Before you send the lads round to disembowel me, look it up, because I've been one for years and am in no danger from arrest and an appearance in the *Daily Mail*. I've been doing some serious imbibulation (ok I may have invented *that* word but it jolly well *ought* to exist) and noting some of the fruitier attempts of the Wine Expert Community to describe some of the bottles under their scrutiny. I've no idea who writes this stuff but they are surely in line for permanent residence in *Private Eye*'s Pseud's Corner, if not the Nobel Prize for Total Literary Bollocks?

In compiling this list I've had to call a halt out of sheer boredom and the urgent need to find a decent corkscrew. It could, of course, be limitlessly long, but you get the idea. If you have any prize examples, send them to me or Fraser.

Personally, I don't read the back of wine bottles; I buy it by price, country and grape, and try to avoid blends. I know almost nothing about wine – just enjoy drinking the stuff: frankly, anything above the level of lighter fluid is ok by me. And believe me, you should read some of the descriptions on French wines. I've not included them because I can't be bothered to insert all those accents and my French is very rusty. C'est la vie.

With fresh bramble fruit aromas.....warming flavours of plums and poached apples.....supple tannins

Complex and elegant..... crisp finish.....zesty exotic fruits.....

Aromas of lime and peach, mouthwatering salinity and flavours of citrus and pear

The region lies atop a layer of caliche which imparts crisp minerality to the wine

Bursts with zesty gooseberry and passion fruit

On the palate: pears and green apple, with a touch of mango

Expressive aromas and flavour of gooseberry green notes, floral and exotic fruits on a zingy refreshing finish

Enriched with intense notes of white flowers and lemon peel, pineapple and peach

An intensely aromatic wine with citrus fruit and white flower aromas.....delivering ripe black fruits, floral notes and gentle oak spice, with smooth dark-berry flavours and a long finish

Red fruit flavours, hints of blackcurrant and cherry, and aromas of vanilla and oak

A juicy, generous and bright wine

Footnote: My article about exercise in a previous newsletter included a photograph without my permission which may have been fraudulently obtained by our usually unimpeachable editor. Despite its depiction of two young, lithe and well fit males (one of them me) I shall shortly be approaching the Press Complaints Commission demanding an apology and considerable damages (i.e. a d

The Bromsash Oenophile

Wine is a fascinating world of history, science, and sensory art. A single bottle requires about 600-800 grapes to produce, yet 90% of wines are meant to be consumed within five years rather than aged.

Etymology of Wine: The word "wine" comes from the Old English *win*, tracing back to the Latin *vinum*. Some romantic linguistics trace the root even further back to Sanskrit, where *venas* means "to love"

PUZZLERS BEWARE



I am a keen (some say fanatical) cruciverbalist, rattling off the Times, Guardian and “newspaper editions (the concise versions I hasten to add) on a daily basis. I find the readers’ comments fascinating, if only showing the depths of pedantry to which we can descend when we debate, and almost come to blows, over our interpretation of the setter’s clues. The golden rule is that clues are just that; neither synonyms nor definitions but try telling that to an irate would-be solver who is convinced that he, and it usually is a he, is right and the setter wrong.

Once I toyed with the idea of contacting twenty or so fellow enthusiasts and clubbing together to buy a field which could be our burial places. Instead of glowing epitaphs on our tombstones, we would have a crossword clue thereby providing the deceased with something to do while we whiled away the long hours of eternity.

My channelling of Billy Liar (a fantasy tale by Willis Hall of a young lad in the wrong job who possesses an all too fertile imagination which is never far away) springs to life here when I see myself triumphing on Mastermind, basking in the plaudits of becoming the oldest winner of the event, with the highest score to boot. No matter how loudly I shriek at the TV screen, from the comfort of my armchair, rather than from the dreaded black one, it has no effect- still the contestant beats me and I retire, with pride still smarting. Thinking along these lines reminds me what has been called the best clue in crossword history- in fact it has had a book written about it.

So, to make a change from identifying photos of obscure parts of Gloucestershire, try this.

“Two girls, one on each knee”. (7 letters)

Cruciverbalist Hayes

Answers to the Editor and solution in next issue

A cyclops was solving a crossword and was stuck on an answer. He asked his wife, “How do you spell Hawaii?” His wife said, “I’m sorry, I don’t think you can spell that; you need two ‘I’s”.



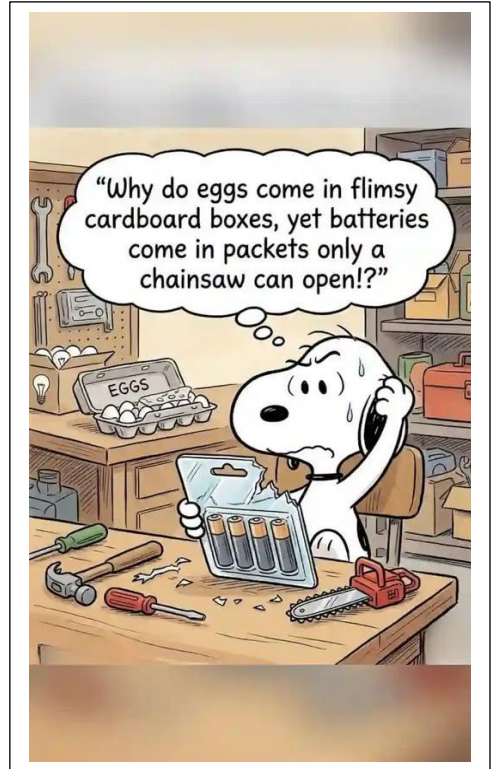
In their first biochemistry class, medical students were standing around a table with a urine sample on it.

The professor dipped his finger into the sample and then tasted it.

He then asked the students to do the same. They felt uncomfortable, but after some time, all of them followed his example and tasted it.

After everyone finished, the professor said "The most important skill is observation. I dipped my middle finger, but tasted my index finger. Today you learned the importance of paying attention.

The students gasped in horror and shock at being duped.



Success...

At age 4 success is not peeing in your pants.

At age 12 success is having friends.

At age 16 success is having a drivers license.

At age 20 success is having sex.

At age 35 success is having money.

At age 50 success is having money.

At age 60 success is having sex.

At age 70 success is having a drivers license.

At age 75 success is having friends.

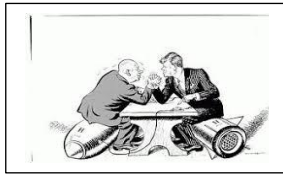
At age 80 success is not peeing in your pants.

MyFunnyWorld.net

A CLOCK FOR RETIRED PEOPLE!



Cold War Operations



Speaker: Bruce Williamson

Before retiring, our speaker had an extensive career in both military and civilian Air Traffic Control.

Following the end of WW2, Britain had been promised access to American atomic bomb technology, but that was later prevented and it was decided that Britain would go ahead and develop its own nuclear weapon named Blue Danube. This led directly to the creation of the V-force: Vickers, Valiant and Vulcan bombers designed specifically to carry the new weapon.

As it transpired, Blue Danube was not a success and Britain has since relied on US developed nuclear weapons.



Operation Jiu Jitsu: If America had to bomb the USSR, they planned to identify targets using radar. It was decided that radar photographs of the targets would be useful. The Americans planned to use the RB45C Tornado, a 4-engine photo reconnaissance aircraft, to carry out reconnaissance flights over the USSR, using air to air refuelling due to the large distances involved. US aircraft and crews were initially prohibited from overflying Soviet territory due to the risk of sparking a direct war.



Consequently, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the UK agreed to fly the covert missions using American planes. In April 1952 the British squadron assigned to the mission, using RB45C aircraft in British colours, flew 3 sorties, using USAF refuelling, to obtain the required photographs. 2 years later, due to improved technology, the missions were repeated to provide better images of the targets. The operation was successful in that better images were obtained, the General in charge of USSR Air Defence was sacked and Churchills risky operations paid dividends. On the downside USSR defences were strengthened.

Project Home Run: was conducted between March and May 1956. This was a highly secret U.S. Air Force aerial reconnaissance mission. A part of the American strategy to attack the USSR included overflying the Arctic to attack from the north. U.S. reconnaissance aircraft flew near and over Soviet territory from Thule Air Base in Greenland to map radar sites, airfields, and industrial complexes along the northern coast of the Soviet Union. The aircraft used were RB47H Stratojet's, originally designed as 6 engine bombers. Around 156 reconnaissance flight were carried out between 2 and 4 per day, and confirmed that there was little or no defences or radar and the flights went more or less undetected.



Operation Chrome Dome: was a United States Air Force Cold War-era mission from 1961 to 1968 in which B-52 strategic bomber aircraft armed with thermonuclear weapons remained on continuous airborne alert, flying routes that put them in positions to attack targets in the Soviet Union if they were ordered to do so. The exact routes varied by year, but in general there were routes that went to positions over the Canadian arctic, Alaska, Greenland, and the Mediterranean Sea.



Interestingly this aircraft is still flying operational sorties against Iran during the current Middle East conflict. Currently there are 8 of these aircraft based at RAF Fairford and can be seen regularly flying over this area.

Several crashes, involving nuclear weapons, occurred over the duration of the project with one of the best-known being at Palomares in Spain. A bomber and refuelling aircraft suffered a mid-air collision and crashed. Of the 4 weapons aboard the bomber 2 fell on land, one fell in the sea and was later recovered and another broke apart on land and caused radioactive contamination.



A later crash at Thule air base in Greenland also caused radioactive contamination and resulted to the closure of Operation Chrome Dome.

Project Dark Gene/Project Ibex: An aerial reconnaissance program run by the Central Intelligence Agency and Imperial Iranian Air Force from bases inside Pahlavi Iran against the Soviet Union. The program was run in conjunction with Project Ibex, which was a more traditional Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) mission. The first operations were during the 1960s with support of Iran's former Shah. Dedicated aircraft, air-bases, and U.S. personnel were stationed at numerous sites in Iran and would regularly fly across the border into the USSR through potential holes in their radar coverage.



Our member Fraser informed the meeting during his service in the RAF during the 60's, he was seconded to the Iranian Air Force and involved with the setting up of Radar Stations in northern Iran at Tabriz and Babolsar, on the Caspian Sea.

The intention of the program was to test the effectiveness of Soviet air defence and interception and resulted in one confirmed loss, in 1973 with an Iranian and US airman captured and later released, and possibly more combat losses in engagements with Soviet aircraft. It was considered a very successful operation.

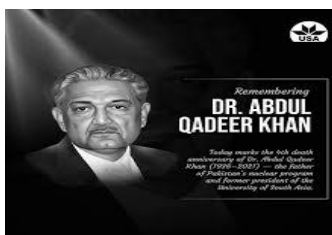


Iran's nuclear ambitions: At the time of Project Dark Gene/Project Ibex, Iran was an ally of the West. Iran's nuclear program began in 1957 under the U.S.-led "Atoms for Peace" initiative. Initially established as a civilian research effort with the backing of the United States, the ambitions shifted dramatically toward weapons development following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

VELA incident: was an atmospheric nuclear explosion that occurred on 22 September 1979, near the South African territory of Prince Edward Islands in the Indian Ocean, roughly midway between Africa and Antarctica. The VELA satellite that detected the explosion was deployed by the US and carried various sensors designed to detect nuclear explosions that contravened the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. This explosion is widely believed to have been an undeclared test of an Israeli nuclear weapon on the ocean surface, carried out with assistance from South Africa. Israel had run a clandestine, privately funded, nuclear program. France provided the program with a nuclear reactor, and beneath the reactor Israel constructed a uranium enrichment facility to create nuclear weapons. These weapons (Jericho missiles) are currently both submarine and land based.



Abdul Qadeer Khan (often referred to as **A.Q. Khan**) is the nuclear scientist famous for both developing Pakistan's nuclear bomb and leading a global black market that sold nuclear secrets to other nations. However, his legacy is defined by two major scandals involving the illicit transfer of nuclear technology:



Theft of Western Secrets: In the 1970s, while working for a subcontractor of the European consortium URENCO in the Netherlands, Khan stole classified blueprints for advanced centrifuges used to enrich uranium. He used these stolen designs to jumpstart Pakistan's own weapons program.

Proliferation Network: Over two decades, Khan orchestrated a clandestine network that sold or bartered nuclear technology, materials, and designs to **Iran, North Korea, and Libya**. He died in 2021 at Islamabad.

Conclusion: The talk concluded by linking events that happened during the height of the Cold War and how they have played out over time to bring us the current conflict between the US/Israel alliance and Iran.

Our speaker, Bruce, provided the members with a fascinating and well researched talk that kept everyone captivated. The members showed their appreciation in the usual way with a well-deserved round of applause.

Chris Yates

"God is on your side? Is he a conservative? The Devil is on my side, he's a good communist."

Joseph Stalin, Soviet leader, to Winston Churchill at Tehran, November 1943

The Power of Prayer



During a Church service, the vicar asked if anyone in the congregation would like to express thanks for prayers which had been answered.

A lady stood up and came forward. She said "I have reason to thank the lord. Two months ago, my husband, Jim, had a terrible bicycle accident and his scrotum was completely crushed, the pain was excruciating and the doctors didn't know if they could help him."

There was an audible gasp from the men in the congregation.

She continued, "Jim was unable to hold me or the children and every move caused him terrible pain". "We prayed as the doctors performed a delicate operation". They were able to piece together the crushed remnants of Jims scrotum and wrap wire around it to hold it in place.

Again, the men in the congregation squirmed uncomfortably as they imagined the horrible surgery performed on Jim. She continued, "Now Jim is out of the hospital and the doctors say, with time, his scrotum should recover completely". All the men sighed in relief.

The vicar rose and tentatively asked if anyone else had anything to say.

A man stood up and walked slowly to the podium.

He said "Hi, I'm Jim and I would like to tell my wife the word is Sternum"

Dianne Abbott was visiting a local school and watched the children playing football. She noticed a young coloured boy standing alone, while all the other boys were running around having fun.

She took pity on him and went over to him and asked him if he was OK.

He replied "Yes thank you"

She said "It's OK if you go over and play with the other boys"

The boy says "I best I stay here"

Puzzled she says "Why is that?"

He said "Because I am the Goalkeeper"!!



"Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?" — George W. Bush,

"Facts are stupid things."
Ronald Reagan,

"You can't go around punching people." —
Former Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott,

Sarah Palin, explaining why Alaska's proximity to Russia gives her foreign policy experience,

Donald Trump talking about Global warming stated "Rising sea levels are going to create more Oceanfront properties"

WHAT'S NEW IN NEWENT- an occasional series.



BYGONES ARE BACK

Time was when every self-respecting town-no matter its size- had its antiques emporium, curio house (or junk shop) depending on how posh you thought you were. In fact, and I digress, the best titled one I have ever seen was called "Junk & Disorderly" and it resided in upmarket Dartmouth of all places. In the past Newent had its own, located opposite the Market House which now houses an Indian takeaway. To this day, we are still using several pieces, purchased from there in the 70s.

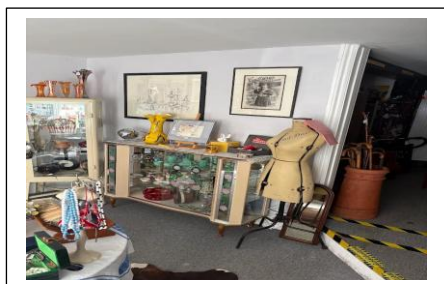
But now the gap in the market has been filled with the opening of Yesterday's Today, located just up from the chemists. Run by husband-and-wife team Clive and Nicky, it is a labour of love for them, combining a business with what has been a lifelong hobby.



Restless, after an early retirement, Clive had first dabbled with a shop in the Shambles but when he spotted this empty shop, he took advantage of its prime position and now, after a month or so's opening, business is coming along well.

Clive concentrates on smaller goods or curios, many with a use that most of us have forgotten, if indeed we ever knew. There is one which resembles a medieval instrument of torture but turns out to be an extremely primitive adding machine. To just browse their collection, is to marvel at what was once good old British craftsmanship, probably over engineered, of everyday items. For example, he has a set of brass weights, sadly what with metrication, now even more outdated. Finished in brass, the finishing would make the most perfectionist proud. Now priced at a few pounds, it would make a fitting memento of the 'Way We Once Were'. Clive's current favourite is a double hemisphere map. Standing some four feet high, you will need a big wall but it is a world of forgotten names and distant Empires of the world

Antiquarian Hayes



Yesterday's Today is currently open on Tues, Thursdays and Saturday from 10.00 -2.00 If you want (or think you need) that small present with a difference or something to cover that embarrassing brown stain on a wall, why not pop in. Like me, you will be surprised what's on offer. Be prepared though for a longer than anticipated visit as Clive just loves to talk about antiques and much else besides.

Man Walks into an Antique Shop...
and says "Hi what's new?"

Today, I ran into the man who sold me an antique globe years ago.
"It's a small world".

Antique French Rifle for Sale:
Never fired, only dropped once.

I inherited my great-grandfather's antique wig-making equipment.
"It's a family hairloom".



Where have I been ?

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