Meet the Locals!

Maurice Dowling

For Highcliffe residents Maurice and Sue Dowling, a surprising connection lay hidden in the medical archives of a London maternity ward. Both were born at St Mary's Hospital, just a few years apart, although their lives took very different paths before bringing them together again. Since moving to the Dorset coast in 2013, they have become active members of the local community, with Maurice playing a leading role in one of the area's sociable groups.

Maurice was born in Kensington, London, but moved with his family to Langley, Berkshire, at the age of four. He attended St Joseph's Catholic School before pursuing his interest in electronics at Slough College, gaining his City & Guilds and Higher National Certificate (HNC) qualifications. His subsequent engineering career included roles with McMichaels, GEC (General Electric Company), EMI, Columbia and Teradyne. In 1989, he established his own company, MicroPoint Plus Ltd, which he successfully ran until his retirement.

His career also opened the door to international travel, with regular business trips to the United States, Germany, France, Denmark and Finland. A keen scuba diver, Maurice took every opportunity to explore underwater whenever work allowed. His passion for travel continues today, with cruises a particular favourite for him and Sue. As Sue jokes, whenever they consider a new holiday destination, Maurice has usually already been there!

Life brought both of them personal heartache before they found happiness together. Maurice was previously married to Denise, with whom he had two sons, but sadly lost her later in life. Sue also lost her first husband, Ron, with whom she had a son and daughter. Having known each other as friends in Langley years earlier, they eventually reconnected, building a supportive relationship that brought them to Highcliffe.

Family remains a great source of pride for Maurice, particularly his three grandchildren. His eldest grandson, Jonathan, recently represented Great Britain at the International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) World Championships in South Africa, achieving an impressive third place in the squat category. Maurice greatly admires Jonathan's dedication and commitment to maintaining the fitness and discipline needed to compete at the highest level.



▲ **ABOVE:** Maurice with the 50th Probus Christchurch Logo.

Maurice has always enjoyed an active life. A keen rugby player in his younger days, he remains a loyal supporter of Wasps, fondly remembering their former home ground in High Wycombe, close to his Berkshire roots. Maurice and Sue swim most days at Freedom Leisure, New Milton. Since moving to Highcliffe, he has also transformed their home through his enthusiasm for DIY.

However, it is Maurice's contribution to local clubs



▲ **ABOVE:** Jonathan Dowling competing in the IPF world championships.

Highlighting Local People...



▲ Maurice & Susan on Holiday Norwegian Fjords.

that has particularly established him as a community-minded resident. In 2014, he joined Christchurch Probus Club, an organisation bringing together retired professional business people to enjoy friendship, new experiences and shared interests. The group meet on a monthly basis at the Harbour Hotel in Christchurch, and have talks on a variety of topics and enjoy a good lunch together. Maurice soon joined the committee and guided the club through the challenges of the covid pandemic as their President. In 2027, he will take on the role of President again, coinciding with the club celebrating their 50th anniversary.

Currently serving as Vice President and Welfare Officer, Maurice works hard to organise enjoyable and stimulating activities. These include theatre outings to the New Forest Players at Ballard School in New Milton and Burley Players Theatre Company, with productions ranging from light-hearted comedy to more thought-provoking subjects. He has also developed a new interest in photography, recently joining the Highcliffe Community Association's photographic section at Greystones, and other Probus group members have joined him in pursuing this local activity.



Probus is very much a social community that welcomes members' wives and partners. Annual holidays together provide opportunities to explore new places and strengthen friendships, while monthly lunches give the women a chance to meet and support one another through life's challenges. A much-loved highlight is the summer barbecue hosted by Maurice and Sue at their Highcliffe home. This past July, on Maurice's birthday, they prepared a feast for 34 members on a scorching hot summer's day, continuing a tradition they have maintained for many years.

Looking ahead to the 50th anniversary celebrations in 2027, Maurice and Sue are planning a buffet at home, allowing everyone to attend and contribute to the occasion. A new colourful Probus anniversary logo has been designed already. The club's forthcoming programme will include the Thursford Christmas Spectacular in Norfolk in 2027, and a June lunch with the Christchurch Mayor invited at Carey's Manor Hotel in the New Forest already in the diary. The group will also enjoy a Christmas meal and entertainment this year at the Barton Golf Club in December 2026.

Maurice and Sue clearly share a love of music, theatre, travel and, above all, bringing people together. Their enthusiasm and generosity have helped create lasting friendships and a welcoming atmosphere within the club.

Anyone interested in joining the Christchurch Probus Club and enjoying its varied programme of activities and friendship can contact their Membership Secretary James Wheildon, Tel: **07963-288206**, Email: **james.wheildon@hotmail.co.uk** or visit the group's website on **www.probuschristchurch.com.**

by Heather Dempsey