



Come and join us at Christchurch Probus

By James Wheildon *

Newly retired? A man of leisure, but now what? Does making new friends, enjoying convivial lunches, joining social gatherings with Probus colleagues and their partners, visiting interesting places, going for a long weekend away anywhere in the country once a year appeal?



If so, Christchurch Probus Club would welcome you. The club is set up for retired, professional men to meet monthly, hear a talk on a wide array of subjects by speakers from all walks of life, chat over coffee before and after the talk, and to share a lunch at the classy Christchurch Harbour Hotel overlooking the estuary in Mundeford.

But the club is much more than a jolly gathering of like-minded chaps once a month. Regular social gatherings are also arranged for members and guests — at nurseries, castles, coffee mornings, the pub, a brewery, picnicking in the New Forest, quiz nights, a round or two of golf, photo competitions and of course the slap-up Christmas lunch.



I'm a retired journalist and I've been with Christchurch Probus for three years and what I particularly like about the club is that it offers such a variety of speakers, outings and places to visit, and it doesn't come heavy on pushing causes, charity or politics, though we do toast Her Majesty at the end of our lunches.

Before the pandemic struck in my first year with the club, we had a very enjoyable long weekend with our partners in the Cotswolds, with excellent meals at our Hilton hotel, and a trip along a steam railway. Last year we spent four days at a Warner's hotel near Hungerford, this time enjoying a glorious sunny trip along the Kennet & Avon canal, and this September we are going to a Dartmoor hotel where Agatha Christie wrote her first published novel and where we are due to go to prison (with the promise it's a visit not an incarceration).



Other outings in my short time have included visiting the restored ancient Eling Tide Mill, an evening's boat cruise along Christchurch's two rivers with a barbecue at Tuckton, a skittles tournament at New Milton (the champion was a Filipina who destroyed both male and female opposition) and a visit to Burley's Durmast House, where the Gertrude Jekyll designed garden has been brought back to its former glory.



As to the monthly guest speaker talks, I've learnt a thing or two about submarines, sugar and slavery, the Normandy landings, scams, taxes and investments, Lawrence of Arabia, Dorset's Kingston Lacy National Trust manor house, what being a stuntwoman for film and TV involves, literary Paris, and growing up in Mudeford from a local fisherman's perspective.

Probus members and partners dressed in their finery for a Christmas lunch.



The essence of Probus as I see it is friendship, conviviality, a once-a-month meeting and lunch with a talk, along with a variety of optional entertaining outings.

If the club appeals, you can opt for a test run first by signing up for a one-off monthly lunch by emailing club secretary.

Maurice Dowling maurice.dowling@gmx.com. Come and join us.

**James began his career at the Eastern Daily Press in Norwich, was on The Times in London and The Wall Street Journal in Hong Kong for 30 years, and he has also worked in Australia, Abu Dhabi and Shanghai*