



FORTY YEARS OF FELLOWSHIP

Beecroft Men's Probus Club 1981-2021



Stuart Braga

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1981-2021**

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Beecroft 2021

First published June 2021

by the Beecroft Probus Club Inc.

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Forty Years of Fellowship, Beecroft Men's Probus Club
1981-2021

ISBN 978-0-9597261-7-6

Photographs

Front cover:

Group of members and guests in autumn 2013 at Gooree Park Horse Stud, Mudgee, described on its website as ‘our stunningly picturesque property with its stately trees’.

Back cover:

Group visiting the Anzac Memorial, Hyde Park, 15 April 2019. A major upgrade completed in 2018 includes a remarkable innovation. The eight walls of the new Hall of Service display soil from 1,701 New South Wales towns, cities, suburbs and homesteads given as a home address by First World War enlistees. Our group was standing on either side of the specimen of the soil of Beecroft.

John and Judith Hilliard at a morning tea stop at Lithgow, 18 September 2009. John joined the club in 1995 and was Outings Convenor from 2004 to 2009. His face shows a very friendly man, known for his quirky sense of humour. His outings were always very well planned, the Hilliards travelling the whole route first to check on every detail.

The club is made up of people. Personal sketches of thirteen of them are placed at the end of the book from page 81 to page 109. They are:

Ron Adams
Bob Adcock
Ron Cull
Harold Davis
Geoffrey Dobbin
Torres Ferres
Harry Learoyd
David McLeish
Charles Miller
John Noble
Vernon Rouvray
Tom Whittaker
Trevor Williams

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Introduction

For forty years the Beecroft Probus Club has effectively carried out its objectives which were clearly stated in its Charter of Incorporation which was set out seven years after its foundation in 1981. This means in effect that the club had already been carrying out those objectives and continues to do so. This history glances at the nature of the community in which the club was set up. It then looks at the way in which voluntary movements came to be set up over a long period of time, especially looking at the phenomenal success of Rotary since its small beginnings in 1905. By contrast, Rotary began in Australia in a big way, in Sydney and Melbourne a century ago in 1921. Its impact throughout Australia since then has been most impressive.

The Probus movement also began overseas in England in the 1960s, coming south of the equator ten years later. Probus has succeeded in Australia and New Zealand because it met so capably the needs of a growing number of retirees, both men and women.

So the story of this club is part of a larger story which tells of communities of people whose lives have been greatly enriched in their later years by the friendship, companionship and the wide range of activities of this excellent movement. This 40th anniversary history sets out to celebrate that achievement. The last chapter, 'Coping with Covid', is longer than the others, because it deals with recent lived experience, but that too is something we can celebrate.

This history could not have been written without the assistance of the following people: President Charlie Mackowski, immediate Past President John Rogers, who encouraged the undertaking. I am especially grateful to Steve Bakoss and Robin Graham who have willingly undertaken to write Chapter 9.

Over many years capable secretaries have taken good minutes of meetings. The monthly issue of 'Probitas' since September 1982 has been a mine of information. Rob Spencer has taken much trouble to make available digital copies of Probitas since 1982. Warren Duff has examined all the records with great diligence and care. He has produced a series of lists of Presidents and other office bearers, major events and in particular obituaries from 'Probitas'. This last has enabled the writing of several sketches intended to demonstrate how at every stage the club has consisted of interesting and worthwhile people.

Stuart Braga

Chapter 1 The Beecroft community

Beecroft and its adjoining suburb Cheltenham have almost from the beginning had special characteristics as dormitory suburbs, but are much more than that. Cheltenham in particular has never had a retail precinct. Beecroft shops until the late twentieth century were small and served only the local community. People did not come to shop at Beecroft unless they lived there. The shops were grouped on two streets between the railway station and Beecroft Road, the main road.

By 1914 there were seven community organisations in descending order of altitude as you come down the road. Placed on either side of Beecroft Road, these were: St John's Anglican Church, the Methodist Church (now the Uniting Church), the Masonic Temple, the Fire Brigade, Beecroft Public School. Opposite it was the School of Arts (now the Community Centre), and further down the hill the Presbyterian Church. There were other organisations serving the community on Beecroft Road. For many years there was Kirra Private Hospital where some members of this Probus Club had their tonsils out, including the present writer. Many babies were delivered there in an era when people did not usually go to maternity hospitals. In a day when many people had horses on their generous allotments of land, and where most people had vegetable patches and chooks in the back garden, there had to be a produce store.

There was one spectacular example of the nature of the Beecroft community at the end of the 19th century. This is the memorial to David Willis, a local boy who was killed in the Boer War on 1 October 1900, one day before his 20th birthday. He was old enough to die for Queen and Empire, but not yet old enough to vote. The voting age was then 21. What made David Willis special is the way in which he was commemorated by the Beecroft community. He did not belong to a rich and important

family. What was important is that he belonged to Beecroft, and they treasured him.

His short life is commemorated in a book by Trevor McCaskill, *One Great Hour*.

Soon afterwards, at the time of Federation in 1901 the station and surrounds were crowded with locals who came to see the train carrying the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, later King George V and Queen Mary, pass through en route to Brisbane. Beecroft was a patriotic community; ‘King and country’ were strong sentiments. Soon



Trevor McCaskill

thereafter, the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Harry Rawson, paid two visits to Beecroft. One was to lay the foundation stone of St. John’s Church and the other was for the laying of the foundation stone of the School of Arts.

Little more than a decade later, World War I left a huge mark upon Beecroft. The tragedy of war was commemorated in several ways. There are war memorials in the churches, but the Civic Memorial placed between the railway station and the School of Arts was spectacular. It bears only seventeen names. They are detailed on the websites of the Hornsby Shire Council and the New South Wales War Memorials Register. Quite the saddest entry is the report of the funeral of Robert Cadden, who was wounded in France in August 1916, was repatriated to Australia some months later, but died of his wounds on 18 December 1917. Two days later his sister Delia also died. Brother and sister were buried together. Many other suburbs and localities have far more names on their memorials because they were more densely settled, but the Beecroft of that era was still an outer suburb. However the great stone memorial makes a powerful statement about the living as well as the dead. It

shows how much this loyal but grieving community wanted to express appreciation of those who had made the supreme sacrifice.

The Beecroft Bowling Club was also the product of the strong community spirit of local people, especially John Wallace, who in 1913 drew together a group of men interested in bowling. A company was set up, capital quickly raised and the club flourished from the start. Ten years later, in 1923, William Harris donated the land for the Cheltenham Recreation Club; he remained its patron for the next thirty years and carefully nurtured it in early difficulties. The Pennant Hills Golf Club was also formed in 1923. Initially a nine-hole course was constructed, mostly by members working at weekends. Both clubs were emblematic of an enthusiastic and very public-spirited community.

Besides the Public School which opened in 1897, there were many small private schools in Beecroft in its early years. Taken together, they added 'tone' to the community. One of the longest-lasting was the Beecroft Grammar School, established in 1925 by the Rev. Albert Booth, who had been Senior Master of Barker College. Mr Booth owned it and ran it until his death in 1960; it closed five years later. Its legacy is Booth Park on Sutherland Rd, originally developed by Albert Booth as his school's sports field. What is now Arden Anglican School began as a small dame school in 1922. Its pupils, including the present writer, were mostly lower primary children. Later, largely due to the efforts of the Rev. Roderick Johnstone, Rector of St John's for more than forty years, it survived World War II and over the years has become a very successful school with campuses at Beecroft and Epping.

The Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust had its beginnings much later. Like the Beecroft Probus Club, the seed for our trust came from England. The catalyst for its establishment was a plan by the Sydney County Council in 1963 to destroy a row of trees in

Wongala Crescent in order to erect poles for high tension electricity mains. Nearby residents began a public campaign to save the trees which involved local members of the NSW Parliament who also put a word in so that a compromise was reached which did save the trees. This success led Mr E. J. Richards to propose the formation of a Civic Trust. He had knowledge of the work of the English Civic Trust, founded in 1957. That organisation was created 'to champion Britain's rich heritage of historic buildings and places' as there were many plans for unsuitable developments in the years following World War II. In 1964 the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust was set up and later incorporated. The Trust continues the fight to retain the inherited character of Beecroft and Cheltenham.

Here was a community which punched above its weight. It did not produce great captains of industry, eminent statesman or heroic generals, but it did produce people of solid worth. They set up churches, sporting clubs and community organisations that bound people together. The Beecroft Probus Club is a worthy heir to this tradition.

Chapter 2 – The beginnings of Rotary

Well before its foundation, the Beecroft Probus Club had solid foundations in the community and culture of the suburb it has always sought to serve. The idea of local community organisations is comparatively recent, though charitable societies are much older, often associated with the need to tackle serious social evils. In 18th century London, the Foundling Hospital, set up in 1739, saved the lives of thousands of babies usually born to single mothers, outcasts in society. It became the charity of choice for the well-to-do, Handel conducting performances of his oratorio ‘The Messiah’ each Christmas for its benefit. Many other charitable bodies followed in Great Britain, North America and elsewhere. In early colonial New South Wales, the Benevolent Society was founded in 1813, meeting a wide variety of social needs.

Starting in 1821, hundreds of Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Arts were set up throughout the English-speaking world to improve the lot of working class men who had missed out on even the most basic education. One of the directors of the first School of Arts in Edinburgh in 1821 described the School in paternalistic terms as ‘part of that magnificent plan ... which has for its object the universal diffusion of useful knowledge among the lower orders.’

Their aim was ‘the intellectual improvement of their members, through the diffusion of scientific and other useful knowledge, and the cultivation of literature, science and art’. They gave opportunities to thousands of men who would otherwise have spent impoverished, illiterate lives. The movement quickly spread to Australia. In 1833 the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts was established. Still running, it has the oldest continuously operating lending library in Australia.

During the next century, about 140 schools of arts or mechanics' institutes were established in Sydney and its suburbs, sometimes known as literary, railway or workingmen's institutes. In many inner-city and interwar suburbs the buildings remain, prominently located on the main street or near the railway station. They were originally established by volunteers as independent community organisations, and they thrived as centres of local community life. The Beecroft School of Arts, now the Beecroft Community Centre, was a good example. It opened in 1904, and thrived, with extensions in 1910 and 2017. Out of voluntary bodies like this gradually developed public libraries, modern community or neighbourhood centres, and well-organised government-run systems of adult and technical education.

The churches too developed men's organisations, such as the Catholic sodalities, the Church of England Men's Society and the Presbyterian Young Men's Mutual Improvement Societies. They all reflected the high moral tone of Victorian earnestness, and their determination to build a better society. By the beginning of the twentieth century, throughout the English-speaking world there was a social expectation that men would gather for friendship, mutual benefit and to undertake projects for the good of society.

In some ways, this sustained, powerful movement was counter-cultural. This was a time when the industrial revolution transformed the societies and economies of most of the world. The profit motive seemed to carry all before it. 'The age of greed' is a phrase used by some commentators to describe this darker side of industrial society. Capitalism in the late nineteenth century produced immense wealth for some industrialists whose methods earned them the opprobrious term 'robber barons'. Many, but not all of them by any means were Americans, because there seemed to be fewer constraints on the way in which American business operated. Yet at the same time

there was a considerable commitment to philanthropy. Some of the greatest philanthropists had gained their vast fortunes through the exploitation of others, but came to realise that there was a social obligation to give their wealth back to the community.

Greater prosperity had several important consequences. It led to greater disposable income and more private time. No longer did almost the entire work force, both urban and rural, have to spend their lives in unremitting toil in order to survive. There was more free time and more spare money. More people could take holidays, could travel, read, attend theatres and sporting events. In America, baseball flourished, and in England, football, which generally meant soccer, became a nation-wide passion. In Australia, cricket became a strongly unifying force as the six colonies came together as a nation in 1901. At much the same time, several codes of football took shape. Rugby Union was first played in Australian elite schools in the 1860s, and was codified over the next forty years. The New South Wales Rugby Football League, with a quite different form of rugby football, was set up in 1907. It soon became far more popular than the older form of the game. What became known as Australian Rules football also developed in private schools, encouraged by headmasters keen for their boys to play ‘manly games’. It was codified by the Victorian Football League in the 1890s, and the code soon became dominant in several Australian states, especially Victoria.

It was in this context of greater prosperity, more free time and well-organised sport that broadly based community organisations began to develop and flourish across the world. One of these, with very small beginnings in Chicago in February 1905, soon became phenomenally successful, and within twenty years became an international organisation. A lawyer, Paul Harris, and three friends met in a small office in downtown Chicago. These men wanted to rekindle in the turn-

of-the-century big city the spirit of friendliness they had known in small towns of their youth. Word of the club soon spread and others were invited to join. They named their new club 'Rotary' to describe the practice of meeting in rotation at the members' various places of business. Later, they would describe it as the world's first service club. Be that as it may, it grew very rapidly and the model was widely adopted.

Originally formed only for friendship, that first Rotary club quickly evolved to use the talents and resources of its members to serve the community. An early principle that has always been followed is that of classification. This was the rule that any given profession or occupation could only be represented by one member. It was adopted to ensure that each Rotary club contained a cross section of the business and professional service of the community. So there could not be more than one bank manager or one civil engineer in each club. It was regarded as an honour to be asked to represent one's profession or occupation in the Rotary club. This quickly gave the Rotary movement prominence in each community and greatly encouraged its rapid spread. To be a Rotarian was to be regarded as a significant leader.

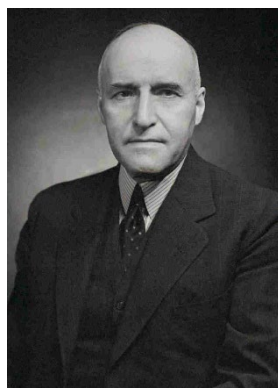
By the end of 1905, the Rotary Club of Chicago had 30 members. Three years later a second club was established in San Francisco. The next year three more clubs were established on the west coast of the United States and a fourth in New York City. Within a few years the movement became international with the founding of a club in Winnipeg, Canada. Soon Rotary crossed the Atlantic to establish clubs in England and Ireland. The clubs banded together as the National Association of Rotary Clubs, which then became Rotary International in 1922.

By then there were twenty clubs in Britain and Rotary clubs were organised in Europe, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. In Sydney and Melbourne, the founders were two Canadian Rotarians, James W. Davidson and Lieut. Colonel J.

Layton Ralston. Early in 1921 these two distinguished Canadians came as emissaries to establish Rotary clubs in Sydney and Melbourne, from which they hoped the movement would rapidly spread throughout Australia.



James W. Davidson



J. Layton Ralston

There could have been no better ambassadors to introduce the highly successful new movement to Australia. Both had personal distinction in a way that would appeal greatly to the cream of the business communities of Sydney and Melbourne. Their starting point was two detailed interviews with the *Sydney Morning Herald* published on 24 March 1921 and the Melbourne newspaper the *Argus* on 2 April. The two visiting Rotarians gave the papers their impeccable credentials. They had been sent by the organisation that would soon become Rotary International to introduce Australia and New Zealand to the Rotary movement. Davidson had a distinguished career both in Canada and East Asia, where he had been in charge of the American Consulate-General at Shanghai, the major port for American trade in China. Earlier on, he had been a member of one of the Robert Peary's three expeditions between 1898 and 1909 attempting to reach the North Pole. He had been appointed a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society in recognition of this.

The *Argus* gave Davidson and his colleague Ralston publicity that money could not buy. The *Argus* told its readers,

‘Lieut.-Colonel Ralston is a leading Nova Scotia barrister, a past vice-president of the Canadian Bar Association, and was a member of the Provincial Legislature of Nova Scotia for 11 years. During the war Lieut.-Colonel Ralston gained distinction with the Canadian Expeditionary Force – in which he commanded a Nova Scotia regiment.’

His imperial decorations and professional recognition were instantly recognised in Australia: CMG, DSO, KC. In that era, the *Argus* did not need to spell them out: Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George, Distinguished Service Order, an important military decoration, and King’s Counsel, equivalent to the modern Senior Counsel, a mark of significant achievement as a barrister.

In Sydney, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was also welcoming. Davidson was asked by the *Herald* reporter about the aims of the Rotary club. His reply captured the ideals of Rotary in a nutshell. Rotary was, he said,

‘an opportunity for service ... the interchange of ideas and of business methods as a means of increasing the efficiency and usefulness of Rotarians; the recognition of the worthiness of all legitimate occupations, and the dignifying of the occupations of each Rotarian, as affording him an opportunity to serve society.’

He went on,

‘In fifteen years, Rotary has become a world-wide movement which is destined to play a wonderful part in bringing together the men of all

nations through the simple medium of acquaintanceship and a new interpretation of the Golden Rule in business.’ He added, ‘membership in Rotary is highly prized by those privileged to enter ... Men are accepted only on invitation.’

This appealed greatly to the leaders of the two communities. These early post-war years were a time of idealism. The Great War had been, it was hoped, the war to end wars, and peace for the future would be guaranteed by the League of Nations, of which both Canada and Australia were full members. Respected community elders accepted leading roles in the planned Rotary Clubs of Melbourne and Sydney. In Melbourne, the first President was Australia’s greatest general, Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, while in Sydney an early member was Sir Henry Braddon, a prominent businessman, who in 1918 was appointed as commissioner to represent Australia in the United States of America, long before Australia had its own diplomatic service. With leaders like these, Rotary was off to a flying start and never looked back.

Chapter 3 – The Growth of Rotary in Australia

It was always the intention that the Rotary movement would spread rapidly throughout Australia. In 1928, the Rotary Club of Canberra was set up, only a year after the nation's parliament was transferred there. By then there were 18 Australian clubs, including the first suburban club at Parramatta, not yet a satellite city. By the end of the 1960s, this number had grown to 96 in NSW, according to a chart published by the Rotary Club of Sydney. They were there to make a difference, and quickly did so, despite the major setbacks of the Great Depression and World War II. A rough count suggests that there are now more than 500 Rotary Parks spread across Australia; there must be few towns that do not have one. Lions and Apex clubs have also spread across the nation.

Local parks remind people daily of the active presence of their local Rotary club. Most of the community service activities of Rotary are less visible, but have had direct impacts on community health and opportunities of many kinds. The broad reach of Rotary has been astonishing and impressive. The Rotary Club of Sydney looks back with justifiable pride on its record, which includes its first project, the New South Wales Society for Crippled Children founded in 1929, now known as the Northcott Society. Others were setting up the Police & Citizens Boys' Clubs, establishing the Mt Eliza Executive School of Business, and supporting the building of the International House to accommodate overseas students at the Universities of Sydney and NSW.

Along the Northern Line, Rotary clubs were steadily founded, first in the larger centres such as Hornsby (1949) and Epping (1963), and later at Beecroft, Pennant Hills, Thornleigh and Normanhurst. The Rotary Club of Beecroft was chartered on 1 August 1971. It had strong roots in the community, and strong

support also from the wives of its members. At that time members were all men, and were known as ‘Rotarians’; their wives were known as ‘Rotary-Anns’. It would now be seen as a condescending term, and in any case became inappropriate when in 1987 women were admitted to membership. In recent years, women have the fastest growing segment of Rotary’s membership. However, at the time, there was some resistance to the change. In the Rotary Club of Sydney, the State’s senior club, this was effectively dealt with by the induction that year of the eminent academic, Dame Leonie Kramer, Chancellor of the University of Sydney, as the first lady member.

More recently, the Probus movement has been enthusiastically implemented by Rotary in Australia and elsewhere. It filled an increasing need for the growing number of retirees in the Australian community as people lived longer. According to data provided by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, life expectancy in Australia has improved dramatically for both sexes in the last century, particularly life expectancy at birth. Rapidly falling rates of infant mortality in the early twentieth century have also had a big effect on tables of life expectancy. Compared with their counterparts in 1881–1890, boys born in 2016–2018 can expect to live around 34 years longer, more than a full generation of human life. Not many men lived to retirement early in the twentieth century, when the Rotary movement began. The Institute’s figures for the life expectancy of men are:

1890	46
1920	50
1938	60
1954	61
1970	73
1982	75
1986	76
1990	77

1995	78
2002	80
2020	83

In brief, Rotary, with its programme of carefully targeted social action, did not need at the beginning to concern itself with retirees. There were too few to worry about, and those who did reach the age of 65 were likely to be in poor health, often with chronic heart trouble. After World War II, this changed dramatically. People lived much longer, and enjoyed a much healthier old age. By 2020, men still alive at age 65 could expect to live to 85, another 20 years. Those who reached 85, could expect to live another 6 years. In 2020 there were 3.9 million retirees in Australia. This rapidly changing demographic made it essential for the Rotary movement to react in some way.

Chapter 4 – The origins of Probus

‘Probus is Rotary’s most successful community service activity for retirees. Probus is the social club of choice, an association for active members of the community and for those no longer working full time to join together in Clubs for a new lease of life in retirement. Its basic purpose is to advance intellectual and cultural interests amongst adult persons, to provide regular opportunities to progress healthy minds and active bodies, through social interaction and activities, expand interests and enjoy the fellowship of new friends.’

So reads a well-considered statement from Probus South Pacific, the organisation that supports the many Probus clubs in what came to be termed ‘ANZO’ – Australia, New Zealand and Oceania. However, Probus is not a home-grown body. It developed first in the United Kingdom, in both England and Scotland, only a few years before Beecroft Probus Club was established. with the development of two community-based social clubs in the 1960s. In 1965, the Campus Club was formed by the Rotary Club of Welwyn Garden City, just north of London. The next year, the first Probus Club with that name was established by the Rotary Club of Caterham, south of London. Both clubs were formed to meet the social and intellectual needs of retired businessmen.

Welwyn Garden City, usually known simply as Welwyn, is about 32 km north of London, Caterham about 26 km south. Once quite distant from the capital, both, like Beecroft, are now affluent commuter suburbs with quick transport systems to the City. Each of these English clubs originated from the drive of a community leader with strong local contacts. At Welwyn, this was Fred Carnill, who had lived there for more than thirty years and was an enthusiastic member of the local Rotary club. He

had recently retired but found a conspicuous lack of facilities for men in his situation. In this strong community, clubs and societies proliferated. Women and young people were all catered for, as were lovers of sport, music and the arts. Conspicuously lacking were facilities for the retired, whose numbers were increasing. Ex-commuters were particularly disadvantaged.

A stocky, energetic man, Fred was, says the Campus Club's history, 'a sportsman addicted to cricket, bowls and soccer. He was an extrovert with a lively sense of humour and an apt turn of phrase ... It was typical of the man that on the evening that the idea was first mooted he telephoned thirty friends and received an enthusiastic response.' Fred's plan was the formation of a lunch club to serve as a focal point for the development of fellowship and social activity among men of similar age and background.

A priority was the choice of a name. Suggestions, sometimes silly, included The Brethren, The Freedom Club, The Paramount Club, the Temple Club, The Carnival (from both syllables of Fred Carnill's name) and The Regent Club (from the first syllables of 'retired gentlemen') and finally, The Nestorians. Freedom may have been suggested because the members were free of the daily treadmill of going to work. Instead of these rather comical names, the name 'Campus Club' was chosen because the location of the first meeting overlooked the pleasant area of Welwyn Garden City's 'Campus'. It has retained the name Campus Club, while still claiming credit for being the first Probus Club. The Rotary Club President, Dr. David Goss, arranged the first meeting as an activity of the club's Vocational Service Committee and 45 men attended, including two knights, Sir Frederic Osborn and Sir Francis Peake, both prominent citizens of Welwyn. That meeting established the Object of the Club in its inaugural minutes. 'This may be expressed simply as the promotion of good fellowship'.

Remarkably, David Goss was present at the club's 50th anniversary luncheon in 2015, being given a place of honour at the front of the obligatory group photograph. Naturally, Fred Carnill was elected the first chairman and continued to hold this position for ten years. According to his wife, he 'ate and slept in the Campus Club'.

He later wrote a booklet, 'A Simple Idea', telling of the club's beginnings. The Rotary District took up the scheme with the result that Rotary International, Britain and Ireland, published a leaflet about the idea to encourage other Rotary Clubs to sponsor a similar club. By 1971, membership had grown to 119 and Fred's 'simple idea' was being developed through the formation of many similar clubs across Britain.

The next club was formed at almost the same time, on the opposite side of London. This was the Probus Club of Caterham, which grew out of an initiative, also in 1965, by the Vocational Services Committee of the Rotary Club of Caterham, under the chairmanship of Harold Blanchard. Here too, there was a clear need for retired professional and business people, newly deprived of conversation in the office, to meet for fellowship and social activities on a regular basis.

The idea was publicised and an open meeting called on 22 February 1966 to assess the depth of interest and possible response. Harold Blanchard's idea was very well received. Forty two attended, forty of whom were to become founding members. They enthusiastically approved the idea and settled on the name "Probus" derived from the first three letters of the words "Professional" and "Business". Following this very successful interest meeting, an inaugural meeting was held on 2 March, the very next week, using the newly selected name, Probus Club. Caterham therefore claims to be the first Probus Club anywhere in the world.

The Rotary Club President, Ken Parry, took the chair and 35 members attended. Lunches were held monthly thereafter. A Committee was formed in May of that year under the chairmanship of Harold Blanchard who chaired the monthly luncheons from June onwards. He is widely regarded as being the 'father' of Probus. The English are fond of monuments and memorials, so he is commemorated with a plaque in Soper Hall, the local community hall. In St. John's Church, the Caterham parish church, is a practical memorial given in Harold's memory. It is a board listing the Churchwardens since the church's opening in 1882.

The Probus movement took several more years to reach first New Zealand, and then soon afterwards Australia. As so often happens, it followed a contact between friends. Rotary was of course well established in both countries by the 1970s, but as yet, Probus was unknown.

Chapter 5 Beecroft Probus Club origins and foundation

It is remarkable how quickly the bush telegraph operates. The Probus movement swept through the United Kingdom swiftly, and within a few years leapt south of the equator, at first to New Zealand, and soon afterwards Probus crossed the Ditch to Australia.

This took place through the initiative of Gordon Roatz, a member of the Rotary Club of Paraparaumu, a town 55 km north west of Wellington. Gordon had been visiting two of his wife's cousins in Helensburgh, in Dumbartonshire at the mouth of the Clyde River in Scotland. One of them went to a meeting of the Dumbarton and District Probus Club and it transpired the Rotary Club of Dumbarton had sponsored it. Gordon considered that the idea was worth introducing to the growing number of retired residents in Kapiti, the coastal district north-west of Wellington of which Paraparaumu is the main town. Paraparaumu, like Welwyn and Caterham, is an outer commuter suburb and has had a Rotary club since 1953. When he returned to New Zealand he secured his Rotary Club's authority to initiate moves to establish a Probus Club in the Kapiti district.

An advertisement was placed in the *Kapiti Observer* and an initial meeting attended by twelve people was held in the Kapiti Boating Club on 5 November 1974. A committee of three was appointed with Gordon Roatz as 'organising Chairman'. With accustomed hospitality, the wives of the Paraparaumu Rotarians provided morning tea. This small group formed the basis on which the Club began. Writing in 2014, Colin Fleury, a club member, proudly commented on the club's website, 'Our Probus club is the first club to start in the Southern Hemisphere, ahead of Australia, South Africa, Argentina and elsewhere.' He added, 'membership rose by forty new members in 1976 and

steadily increased to peak at a membership more than 200 in the early 1990s.’ he added, ‘With a growing membership it became apparent that there was a need for other clubs to be formed ... as time has passed further clubs have been formed until there are now 12 clubs on the Kapiti Coast with a combined membership more than 1500. Currently there are more than 450 clubs in New Zealand and it is recorded that 50% of all clubs worldwide are in Australia and New Zealand.’ In 1975 a member of Kapiti Rotary Club came to Australia, to Hunter’s Hill, and in 1976 the Probus Club of Hunters Hill was formed with the aid of Rotary sponsorship.

The three clubs referred to in England, Scotland and New Zealand which encouraged the establishment of Probus clubs in NSW all had at least one thing in common. They were sponsored by strong Rotary clubs in affluent outer commuter suburbs of major cities. This was true too of Beecroft. The Rotary Club of Beecroft was chartered on 1 August 1971. It was not the first in the area. Hornsby has had a Rotary club since 1949, Epping since 1962. The Rotary Club of Castle Hill was chartered in 1965. Later, clubs were set up at Thornleigh, Pennant Hills and Normanhurst. Thus by the 1970s, Rotary was strong and well-represented in the Northern suburbs.

The Charter President of the Rotary Club of Beecroft was Keith Spark, whose father had set up in business as a cobbler in Beecroft in 1931. In three generations the family built up a reputation for honesty, excellent service and genuine care of their customers. Rotary’s principal motto is Service above Self. This neatly encapsulates the movement’s Four-Way Test.

Is it the TRUTH? Is it FAIR to all concerned? Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS? Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

The Spark family and many others over the years have personified all these Rotary principles. The membership profile

has included doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers, pharmacists, business managers, company directors and senior public servants among many other classifications. All have made a success of their varied careers and have been determined to make a difference both in their community and in the broad international reach that Rotary has always emphasised. This club was ideally placed to sponsor a Probus club.

Some years later, in February 1981, five senior Rotarians from all three Rotary Districts in the Sydney area, all of whom had been involved in the formation of Probus clubs, combined to share their experiences with the intention of preparing some basic information for Rotary clubs contemplating the formation of more Probus clubs. They were District 9680 Past Governor Bob Burnett, Rotary Club of Turrumurra; Past President Bill Jacobs, Rotary Club of Hunters Hill, who was Chairman of the District 9680 Probus Committee; Cec Short, Rotary Club of Turrumurra and member of the District 9680 Committee; District 9690 Past Governor Jim Stanford, Rotary Club of Padstow; and Cliff Johnstone, Rotary Club of Sydney, Chairman of the District 9750 Probus Committee.

Based on the growth of Probus in the region from two to forty-four clubs in less than five years, they predicted a rapid escalation in the future growth rate. Reporting their findings to the District Governors of the three districts centred on the Sydney metropolitan and near country areas, they recommended the provision of an information service to Rotary clubs throughout the region. The result was the Probus Information Centre (now the Probus Centre — South Pacific Inc.), which was established by authority of the three District Governors to assist with planning and promotion to ensure steady growth and maximum efficiency in the use of Rotary resources.

The Beecroft Rotary Club had met at the Beecroft Bowling Club for many years. Naturally, the Beecroft Probus Club chose the same location.

Writing for the silver jubilee in June 2006, Alan Judson, a foundation member, recalled the origins of Beecroft Probus Club with remarkable clarity. From his point of view, it could not have taken place at a better time. 'I retired in mid-June 1981. An advertisement appeared in the local paper, placed by the Beecroft Rotary Club saying they were planning the beginning of a gentlemen's club in Beecroft. The advertisement was seen by my wife Judith.'

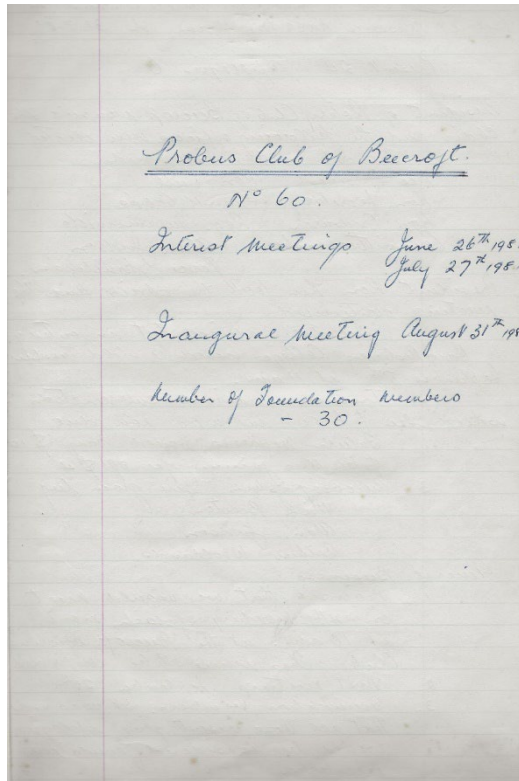
She told Alan that he should attend. Wise man, he did as he was told. Alan went on,

'So on 26 June I together with others attended a meeting in the Masonic Hall. Don Richmond, a member of the Rotary Club, presided and told us about the future of a Probus Club in Beecroft. I sat next to Perc Mulligan. We conversed and thought it was a great idea. We had morning tea and Ron Richmond called for nominations to begin a 'steering committee' for the foundation of the Probus Club. Both Perc and I found ourselves members, together with others: Ron Richmond, Ron Cull, Ray Stanton and Frank Cooke. Don Gale attended this meeting as a member of Rotary and later became a foundation member of the Probus Club because of his impending retirement. We had many discussions in the home of Ray Stanton, who was also a Rotary Club member, and so formed the link. A further interest meeting was held on 27 July, which determined to proceed with the plan. So the Beecroft Probus Club was up and going!

The members of the first committee were:

Ron Richmond	President
Ron Cull	Vice-President
Frank Cooke	Secretary
Reg Summerville	Treasurer
Alan Judson	Committee
Perc Mulligan	Committee
Ray Stanton	Committee

Ron Cull took over from Ron Richmond. Ron served as President for 18 months – the Probud Head Office said something about all clubs should be the same.’



The first entry in the Minute Book

Therefore the Beecroft Probus Club was founded on 31 August 1981 with 30 members. The office bearers were Ron Richmond (President), Ron Cull (Vice-President), Frank Cooke (Secretary), Reg Somerville (Treasurer), Alan Judson and Perc Mulligan (Committee Members).

The name of the movement had been 'Probus' since it had been founded, so there was no discussion about that. However, Wal Johnston clearly remembered in 2006 that Ron Cull, when President, said that to him that PROBUS stood for PROBITY, which means uprightness and honesty. The founders of the Beecroft Probus Club were more than happy to affirm the name adopted sixteen years earlier in what at that time was still often called the 'Mother country'.

The Beecroft Probus Club has distributed a monthly newsletter since September 1982. Wal Johnston suggested PROBITAS as an appropriate name for the newsletter. It happens that PROBITAS is the Latin root for PROBITY. His suggestion was adopted, and the name has been retained by this club ever since. So too has been the moral attribute suggested by the Latin word.

Chapter 6 The first twenty years 1981-2000

The new club was from the first remarkably successful. Starting with thirty members, it swiftly grew to the initial limit of sixty and within a few months there was a waiting list of twelve. The ceiling of sixty was raised in March 1984 to seventy and then slightly increased to seventy-five. The founders did not want a club that would be too big and impersonal.

There are several reasons for this success. Firstly, it clearly met a real need in the community. Secondly, it was very well led by people with standing in the community. Thirdly, the office-bearers went to considerable trouble to arrange an interesting programme of speakers who were experts in their field and spoke about subjects that appealed to members. Fourthly, there was an excellent programme of outings to interesting places. Most importantly, its members from the beginning were people who had made something of their lives in many different spheres, and had the skills and experience in human relations that made them agreeable companions. This was from the first a happy and harmonious club, but not impersonally large.

The second president, Ron Cull, observed in the club's new magazine 'Probitas' in March 1983, 'the initiative for the formation was taken by Beecroft Rotary, but this is the only link we have with Rotary.' However, for several years the President of Rotary was invited to the Change-over luncheon in June; this Rotary term was adopted by the Probus club for several years, later being called the President's luncheon. The first few meetings established a continuing pattern that has proved suitable for forty years. The club meets on the 4th Monday of the month at 10.00 a.m. and concludes its meeting at 12 noon. There were to be two luncheon meetings, one at Christmas and the other in mid-year to mark the change of presidency. There would be two other meetings to which ladies would be invited.

Whereas the weekly meeting of the Rotary club is a dinner meeting, the monthly meeting of the Beecroft Probus Club is a morning meeting. A major difference between the Rotary movement and its off-shoot, Probus, is that Rotary has five avenues of service: Club, Vocational, Community, International, and Youth Service, sometimes more recently termed 'New Generations'. The fundamental reason behind the establishment of the first Rotary club in 1905 was to encourage good fellowship between members, and this remains the case, but Rotarians very soon found that they could do a great deal more. It made good sense that Probus, with its membership consisting solely of retirees, should concentrate on fellowship as its principal aim.

An early decision was not to record attendance, unlike Rotary, where weekly attendance is required, and Rotarians are expected to make up at another club if they miss a meeting. Probus was more relaxed in its expectations, though quite soon disappointment was expressed that the number attending the monthly meetings was usually in the forties, about 75% of the membership. There was no mechanism for removing defaulting members to make way for others on the waiting list. Ron Cull noted sadly in September 1983 that some members had not attended for six months. After a couple of years, the limit on numbers was raised to seventy.

The committee gave careful attention to the programme of talks. Not surprisingly, the first talk, in October, was on Gallipoli, about which everyone's interest could be guaranteed. There followed a considerable variety in the next few months – quality control in the RAAF, railway signalling, bushfire brigades and the history of names and their meaning. Members and their guests who attended the first Christmas luncheon heard a talk on 'Diet for the Oldies'. It was perhaps the wrong time of the year to tackle this topic, important though it is. A good idea that has also persisted was to ask new members to recount their

autobiographies. The first was Vern Rouvray, chosen, it appears, not because his career was particularly luminary, but because he was a good bloke, liked by everyone. Like many, perhaps most members, he had served in World War II. For several years, almost all the autobiographies were given by the founding members. Given that there were ten regular meetings each year, it would take six years to work through all sixty early members. However, during that time, several founding members had left the club or had died. Many of the founding members were members of the Beecroft Bowling Club, so for many years there was an annual Bowls Day. These were all day occasions with a luncheon provided by the wives of members. For several years, these days were organised by Bert Prince, Max Brotchie and Wal Johnston.

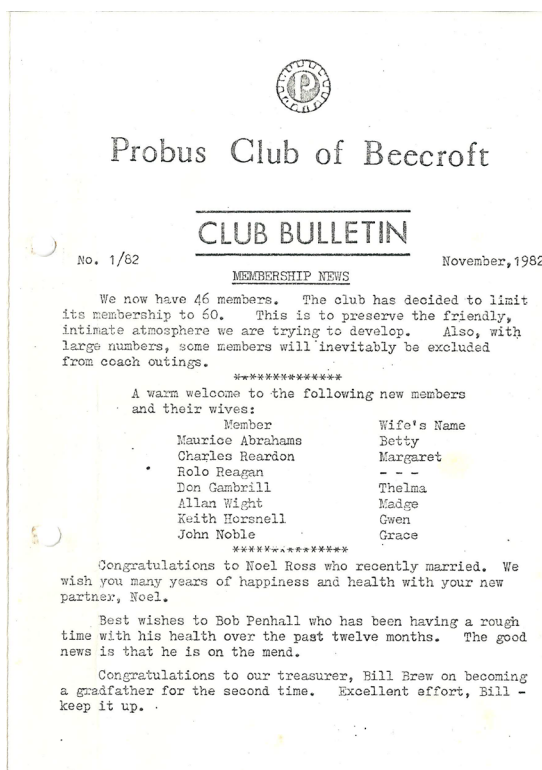
An active programme of outings by coach was also planned, to the Hunter Valley, to Campbelltown and the Cordeaux Dam and to the Ryde District Hospital. They were well patronised, and in the next few years more were planned, including to the Queen Victoria Building, then undergoing a major renovation that would turn a crumbling eyesore into one of Sydney's showpieces. An outing that was similar in some ways was to the Mooney Mooney Creek Bridge north of the Hawkesbury River. It was the most important single project in the Sydney-Newcastle Expressway, later to become the M1, and was seen by the Department of Main Roads as a particularly fine engineering achievement. Experts in a variety of fields came to tell members about such things as camellias, bookbinding and making musical instruments. Professor Jack Davies spoke about sand dunes. Perhaps the best-known woman in her generation in Sydney was Betty Archdale, the very outspoken former headmistress of Abbotsleigh. The minutes do not record her topic, but the meeting was very well attended.

It appears that outings catered for a club of recent retirees. Early outings involved travel; visits closer to home but of obvious

interest were to the Supreme Court and the Stock Exchange. Over many years a similar range of talks, activities and outings was maintained. It is clear that members of the committee had good contacts and so the speakers list included many people who were expert in their field. The Senior Materials Scientist of Hawker de Havilland spoke about aircraft construction. There was sometimes a university professor. Prof. Alfred Pollard, a distinguished actuary, spoke on an intriguing topic, 'If the nations of the world are materially better off than ever before, surely it must follow that the citizens must also be that way too'. The Secretary, Geoff Stow, commented, 'he then in a most interesting talk proceeded to show that this is not necessarily the case'. Alf Pollard had enduring fame. His biography, 'The Kid from Norfolk Island' was much later launched by John Howard.

Sir Eric Willis, former Premier of NSW, spoke about the Arthritis Foundation of which he was the Executive Director. Ron Adams, Secretary for several years, often added to the minutes of each month's meeting an impression of the speaker's success. At the 1989 Christmas Luncheon the famous aviator, 'Nancy Bird Walton gave a most interesting address ... which was very well received.'. A talk on Governor Phillip 'was enthusiastically received by all'. However, a letter from the Road Transport Authority drawing attention to a safety campaign directed at elderly road users was received frostily. Relations with the Beecroft Bowling Club were always cordial, and the Probus club made a donation each year of \$200. This would eventually become a definite charge. It took seven years for name badges to be obtained for members, with a variant badge for their wives. Their use has always been appreciated. The minutes for each committee meeting were always accompanied by a financial statement; careful budgetary control has ensured a sound financial position since the club's beginning.

An interesting idea in 1998 was the compilation of a list of members' interests, obviously to serve as a guide for future outings and talks that would interest people. These were: Antiques, Art, Ballet, Billiards, Boating, Bowls, Bridge, Bushwalking, Caravanning, Cars, Charity Work, Chess, Church, Coins, Cosmology, Cricket, Education, Environment, Fishing, Gardening, Gem Collection, Golf, History, Hockey, Home PC, Internet, Investing, Mah-Jong, Metalworking, Modelmaking, Music, Museums, National Trust, and finally, Opera. Of these the interests with more than six adherents were Boating, Bowls, Bushwalking, Church, Fishing, Gardening, Golf, History, Home PC, Investing and Music. By far the most popular were Bowls, Gardening and Golf. No mention was made of Travel or Ocean Cruises. Perhaps these activities increased in popularity later.



The first issue of 'Probitas', September 1982

Early issues of 'Probitas' make frequent reference to the health of members, and the minutes of the Christmas luncheon in 1989 refer to the attendance of a large numbers of widows of deceased members, but do not state how many. This was still a time when to be elderly meant for many to be ill and frail. The next forty years would see a dramatic improvement in both the longevity and in the health of retirees.

Best wishes to Ken Brown after successful surgery. I believe it has made a new woman of you, Ken.

Best wishes also to Roy Pratten who also has had surgery.

Lin Winley is slowly gaining ground after suffering from a stroke over twelve months ago. Lin is still in a wheelchair, but hopes to be at our February meeting.

Our thoughts and best wishes to Ailie Benson after major surgery in Hornsby Hospital. Get well, Ailie - we miss you.

'Probitas' January 1983. The magazine sometimes poked gentle fun at members.

Torres Ferres was the editor for seven years from 1989 to July 1995 when he resigned after 91 issues due to declining health. In his final 'Probitas', Torres expressed confidence in his successor.

POSITION VACANT -
"PROBITAS" EDITOR

Mainly due to my declining health, this is the **LAST** Edition of "Probitas" for which I will be the Editor.

Our Club is certain to receive great benefit from the new ideas and enthusiasm exhibited by the new Editor.

Obviously, access to a typewriter is necessary. Access to a computer is NOT necessary; but could be helpful.

Of course, if any assistance is sought it will be readily given.

Torres Ferres

Editor for 7.5 years - 91 issues of "Probitas"

The first twenty years of the Bescroft Probus Club were years in which it undoubtedly fulfilled its stated aims capably. These were spelled out in some detail at the time of the club's

incorporation in October 1988. In brief, they were to provide regular meetings and fellowship for retired and semi-retired professional and businessmen and others with like backgrounds. This in a nutshell was the secret of the club's success. Its members did indeed have like backgrounds, largely because they all come from Beecroft, Cheltenham and neighbouring suburbs, which have a strong degree of homogeneity. Beyond this, there was a further bond that linked members. Many, perhaps most, had served in one of the armed forces or the merchant marine in World War II. That service, even though it took place many years earlier, gave them a strong bond of common service to the nation in its time of need and peril. It steeled the character of ex-service personnel in a way that no-one else could quite understand. The Beecroft Probus Club, more than the Rotary Club, the Bowling Club or the Golf Club, had many members on whom were imprinted these timeless and fundamental values of service to a cause greater than the sum of its parts.

Presidents 1981 to 2000

1981-1982	Ron Richmond
1982-1983	Ron Cull
1983-1984	Ron Cull
1984-1985	Alan Judson
1985-1986	Percy Mulligan
1986-1987	Doug Pulsford
1987-1988	Frank Cooke
1988-1989	Pat Whalan
1989-1990	Joe Martin
1990-1991	Ralph Odlum
1991-1992	Arthur Knight
1992-1993	Ewart Hungerford
1993-1994	Trevor McCaskill
1994-1995	Harold Davis
1995-1996	Bert Stoddart
1996-1997	Tom Ross
1997-1998	Trevor Williams
1998-1999	Graham Hoskin
1999-2000	Ted Hallman

Chapter 7 The next twenty years 2000-2019

The success of any community organisation depends on its leadership as much as the quality of its membership. In this important matter, the Beecroft Probus Club has been well served throughout its forty years by a succession of office bearers who have worked hard to serve its members. A list of presidents is therefore placed at the end of chapters 6 and 7, and a list of honorary members and life members is placed at the end of chapter 8. These are members whose service to the club over many years has been particularly noteworthy.

Presidents have come from diverse backgrounds, but their leadership has been of uniformly high quality. Some have owned and run their own businesses. Others have been senior executives in large businesses. Several have been professional men with many years of experience, sometimes the recognised leader of their area of professional expertise. Usually, an incoming president has served in various roles on the committee, such as Programmes Director and Tours Director, Secretary, then as Vice-President and the following year becoming President. The Immediate Past President often serves as welfare officer, reporting on members' health, because in his previous roles he has acquired a great deal of knowledge of his fellow members. Therefore the members of the team know each other well and always work together harmoniously.

This is documented well in the monthly 'Probitas', which began in 1982 as a single sheet of paper folded to form four small pages. It served its purpose well for that era. In the last forty years, the advent of personal computers and the rapid advance in technology have seen a great change. 'Probitas' was still a single sheet ten years later in 1992, but the Christmas issue that year was printed in green; in 1995 and 1996 it was red. By 2006 it was possible to insert coloured photographs, one of the early

ones being of Reg Turner and his wife Gladys on Reg's 90th birthday.

No later editor has held the position for as long as Torres Ferres did in the 1990s. For its first twenty years, 'Probitas' contained little but details of forthcoming talks and excursions, often repeated from month to month, but first Ray Rogerson, adept at many technical tasks, and then Graham Henry with his skill with Microsoft Publisher, transformed the magazine from 1998 onwards. The president, Keith Coble, commented in 2003, 'His very colourful editions of 'Probitas' were enjoyed by all and his inclusion of photographs from some of our outings were an added pleasure.' The July 'Probitas' in 2004 included colour photos of the Changeover Luncheon, as it was still called. Stuart Braga, editor from 2006 to 2012, and later editors, Ian Beazley, John Rogers, Bob Spencer and John Meikle have sought to maintain and enhance the standard of competence pioneered by Ray and Graham. What might otherwise be empty spaces were often interspersed with humorous fillers.

Graham Henry was President when the club celebrated its 25th anniversary in June 2006. Graham used his technical skills to produce a magnificent silver jubilee issue of 'Probitas' which was distributed at the Jubilee Luncheon.

It had 16 pages, several of which were printed with colour photographs. Graham paid generous tribute to the thirty founding members. He noted, 'of the original 30, the following are still active members: Max Brotchie, Ralph Odlum, Don Gale, Rod Simpson, Wal Johnston, Reg Turner, Alan Judson, Perce Mulligan and Noel Ross'. Several Past Presidents contributed interesting accounts to 'Probitas' of the highlights of their presidential year.



Graham Henry

Particularly appropriate was the way in which the formalities of the luncheon were organised in a way that honoured the founders and those who followed them. The Guest Speaker was Andrew Tink, the Member for Epping in the NSW Parliament. The vote of thanks to the Guest Speaker was given by Des Morton. While Des had only joined the Beecroft Probus Club in 2002, his membership of the Beecroft Rotary Club went back many years. The toast to “The Beecroft Probus Club” was proposed by Past President Trevor Williams, a member since 1991. There was also a toast to “The Foundation Members” proposed by Past President Keith Coble, a member since 1995.

Graham, as President, made a presentation of Foundation Pins to Founding Members, and finally there was the Cutting of the Birthday Cake by one of them, Alan Judson and his wife Judith. This Silver Jubilee was organised and carried out in a splendid and memorable way. It was very affirming to the spirit and values of the club.

Also in 2006 was the issue of a sheet of postage stamps recognising the 30th anniversary of Probus in Australia.



Other neighbouring Probus clubs have been established over the years, the Beecroft Probus Club being the senior club. In recent times, most new Probus clubs have welcomed men and women. This is a membership pattern that has generally succeeded. By the early 1990s, there was no longer a waiting list, and the president for 1993-1994, Trevor McCaskill, observed in his monthly letter for October 1993, 'Vacancies occur from time to time. Have you thought about suggesting the name of a friend or acquaintance to join our Probus? We need a continuing supply of new young members to keep our club alive and active.' There were then 72 members.

Some years later, in November 2006, Graham Henry addressed the matter of membership at some length. By then, the nominal membership had been pegged at 80, and the current membership was 73. He wrote,

'The problem, if it really is a problem, is the decline in membership of the same gender. Beecroft Probus Club is one of the senior clubs in this state. We have a complement of eighty persons. In reality, we have seventy three active members, a figure which includes Life Members and Honorary Members, and if I am being truthful, we have an active club of some sixty-six members. Bob Conrow mentioned to me that on a good meeting day we could have an attendance of forty-five people.'

He went on to raise matters for discussion. We could, he suggested,

'Seek help from other Probus Clubs in the area by means of an official notification. Nomination by existing members is the preferred method.'

Write to sporting and social clubs in this area seeking the names of retired persons who may not have considered a Probus club on their activity list.

Make an approach to Beecroft Rotary Club, our progenitor, for the names and recommendations of people who are about to retire.

Propose a change from a single gender club to a mixed club (this thought might cause some discussion).

It pays to advertise but this slogan may not be applicable in our case. A spin on this idea would be that we advertised in house through Probus Centre.

Place editorial articles in local newspapers. Press releases after the Silver Jubilee did not bring any response. The Committee I think would be against direct advertising for members.'

These matters have indeed been discussed from time to time, but the usual method of recruitment continues to be personal invitation. Over the years, the demographic profile has changed. In early years there were many members of the Beecroft Bowling Club. In later years, many golfers joined the club, personal invitation being the usual avenue of recruitment. Whereas mixed clubs have predominated elsewhere, the Beecroft Probus Club has continued to be a men's club. Membership, pegged at 80, remained fairly stable until 2000, but gradually fell away after 2004, reaching a low of 51 members in April 2015. At that time, the average number of members attending meetings was 37. Thereafter, membership numbers recovered to the low 60s by 2017.

That year, the President, Ian Beasley and three other members led by Robin Graham as Recruitment Coordinator undertook a concerted membership recruitment drive which had a target of 20 new members and achieved 14, bringing membership into the 70s for the first time for more than a decade. However, the hoped for recruitment of younger retirees did not happen as members invited friends of the same age as themselves. Although numbers increased in 2017, so too did the average age of the club's members.

The tours and outings were always finely tuned to well-selected varieties of interests. There was nothing boring about any of them, such as major projects like the Sydney Metro North, medical or scientific research facilities such as Choice and occasionally a historical site such as Laperouse or Fort Scratchley in Newcastle. The Botanical Garden at Mount Tomah was a particularly inspired choice. Throughout its existence, the Beecroft Probus Club has been well served by energetic and far-sighted committee members. Retiring presidents were always appreciative. Ron Adams, who served as auditor from 1984 to 1988 and as treasurer from 1988 to 1993, was then auditor again for 13 years until 2006. He was rightly recognised as 'the ever-dependable Ron Adams'.

A selection of some of approximately two hundred topics in these two decades gives ample proof of the careful work of the committee. Among the highlights was a talk about the tragedy of the Sandakan death marches in 1945, widely considered to be the single worst atrocity suffered by Australian servicemen during the Second World War.

Similar, in an uncanny way, was a talk on the voyage of the *Dunera*, a troopship which was crammed in 1940 with young Germans who had been in Britain and were then sent to Australia. While they were not killed as the victims of the death marches were, their treatment by the ship's officers was brutal and inhumane. A speaker from the Australian Meat and

Livestock Exporters Association spoke on 'Exports to the Middle East', a matter that was to become highly contentious in later years. Paul Brunton, an expert from the State Library spoke on 'The life and voyages of Matthew Flinders'. The great navigator was the first to circumnavigate Australia, His book and charts were published in 1814, and soon thereafter, the name 'Australia' became the name by which our country is always known.

On one occasion, the speaker was billed as Mr A.B. Paterson. Sure enough, it was indeed 'Banjo' Paterson, not in person, but speaking through seven members who 'volunteered' to read seven of his best-known poems. Not long after the fires which devastated large parts of the ACT in January 2003, including Mt Stromlo Observatory and 470 houses, a speaker from the National Parks and Wildlife Service spoke of his personal experiences at that time. It was a disaster that deeply affected people as well as property. It shocked the nation and many members of this club were affected. This writer was travelling to Canberra the next morning, stopping at McDonald's at Sutton Forest. It was packed with elderly people and children, mainly teenagers. They were all quiet or talking in low tones. It was clear that the youngsters had lost their homes and had been collected by grandparents who had driven through the night and were on their way back to Sydney.

Medical research and modern medical practices have always figured in each year's programme. An example is microsurgical techniques. We were told the story of a pioneer in the field, Dr Earl Owen, who in 1970 successfully reattached the finger of a two year old boy. In 1988, by now Professor Owen, he performed a hand transplant. However, this did not succeed because the patient neglected his essential medication. Sometimes history and technology were neatly combined, as in outings to the Zig Zag Railway and later to the Joadja Creek Heritage Village. The Zig Zag Railway carried trains from the

Blue Mountains to Lithgow and beyond from 1869 to 1910. It was a major force in the development of western New South Wales. Another piece of industrial heritage on the list of outings was Joadja. This was a thriving mining town near Mittagong where kerosene was extracted from shale between 1870–1911. Its industrial ruins are not well known, but are fascinating. A different subject from the usual programme of topics dealing with history, recent events, scientific, environmental, technological and medical matters was an address by the Senior Minister of St Paul's, Castle Hill on Islam. Some years later, the Rev. Canon David Claydon, former Senior Minister of St Matthew's West Pennant Hills, also spoke on a closely related subject.

Members' autobiographical sketches continued. It has always been an impressive aspect of the Beecroft Probus Club that it has attracted members with distinguished backgrounds, but in 2003, the president felt constrained to make a request. 'Members giving their Autobiography or Small Talk are asked to make them potted versions with the total time being between 10 and 15 minutes with 15 minutes the absolute limit.' Later, a variation made these talks even more interesting, with the topic focussed on 'The year that made me'.

Outings have always been a major part of the club's activities. There has often been an attempt to visit several places of interest in the same locality. Thus at Thirlmere there was the Railway Museum and also a honey factory. The Fish and Ships tour went first to the Sydney Heritage Fleet at Pyrmont, the highlight of which is the 'James Craig', Sydney's only 19th century square rigger, carefully restored to full sailing condition. This work cost almost \$30 million and took nearly forty years to complete after the hulk was rescued from Recherche Bay in Tasmania. Then the tour went on to the Sydney Fish Market for the Fish part of Fish and Ships.

While history and technology have often predominated, as for example a visit to the NSW Museum of Fire at Penrith, which clearly combined both, a very popular group booking at the Sydney Opera House for ‘The last Night of the Proms’ made it possible for members to enjoy the unique atmosphere of this famous event in Sydney instead of going to the Royal Albert Hall in London, where is it a long-established tradition.

For some years there was a well-patronised annual barbecue, usually to Vision Valley or Fagan Park. Vision Valley was a well-equipped outreach of the Wesley Mission at Arcadia. Fagan Park at Galston has been described by the Hornsby Council as ‘the crown jewel of Hornsby Shire’s parks, covering 55 hectares that include a range of attractions for everybody’.

Several much longer visits proved highly successful over the years. These included a six day and five night trip to the Victorian High Country, a visit to Kangaroo Island, a bus tour to Lightning Ridge, taking in several towns in northern New South Wales, and, perhaps the most distant tour, an excellent visit to Cairns and its hinterland. On this occasion, the activities included a boat trip to Green Island where taking a flat-bottomed boat over the coral reef there showed members the extent of damage to the coral, which was mostly dead.

Over a period of years, golf and bowls became less prominent than they had once been. In 2002 the District Golf Coordinator described himself as ‘Shanghaied’, but the District Bowls Coordinator reported a very successful day that year with more than 90 bowlers attending. In later years, bad weather seemed to beset the Beecroft bowlers. Borrowing a phrase from ‘My Fair Lady’, the organiser commented ruefully, ‘The rain in Beecroft falls mainly on the Beecroft Bowling Club’.

In all of this varied activity, the role of the president was critical. In August 2004, Derick Smith wrote, ‘I can only stress to members and, in particular, the newer members, that the outings

provide an enjoyable means of getting to know your fellow Probians. I remind all members that the foundations on which Probus is based are fellowship and friendship. Our meetings and social activities provide the opportunity for retirees to meet in circumstances which encourage intellectual stimulus and companionship.’

That same year, Derick put his finger on an essential feature of leadership in reporting the death of a past president, Ted Hallman. He wrote, ‘Ted had the happy knack of making new members feel very welcome’. The Beecroft Probus Club has been particularly well served by its presidents throughout its history in this and in many other respects.

Presidents 2000 to 2022

2000-2001	Tom Whittaker
2001-2002	Brian Gill
2002-2003	Keith Coble
2003-2004	John Clough
2004-2005	Derick Smith
2005-2006	Ken Purcell
2006-2007	Graham Henry
2007-2008	Harry Maltman
2008-2009	Harry Learoyd
2009-2010	Peter Ditzell
2010-2011	Ken Ryan
2011-2012	David Smith
2012-2013	Charles Miller
2013-2014	Stuart Braga
2014-2015	Murray Forrest
2015-2016	Steve Bakoss
2016-2017	Ian Beasley
2017-2018	Bob Taylor
2018-2019	Robin Graham
2019-2020	John Rogers
2020-2021	Charles Mackowski
2021-2022	Phil Sharp

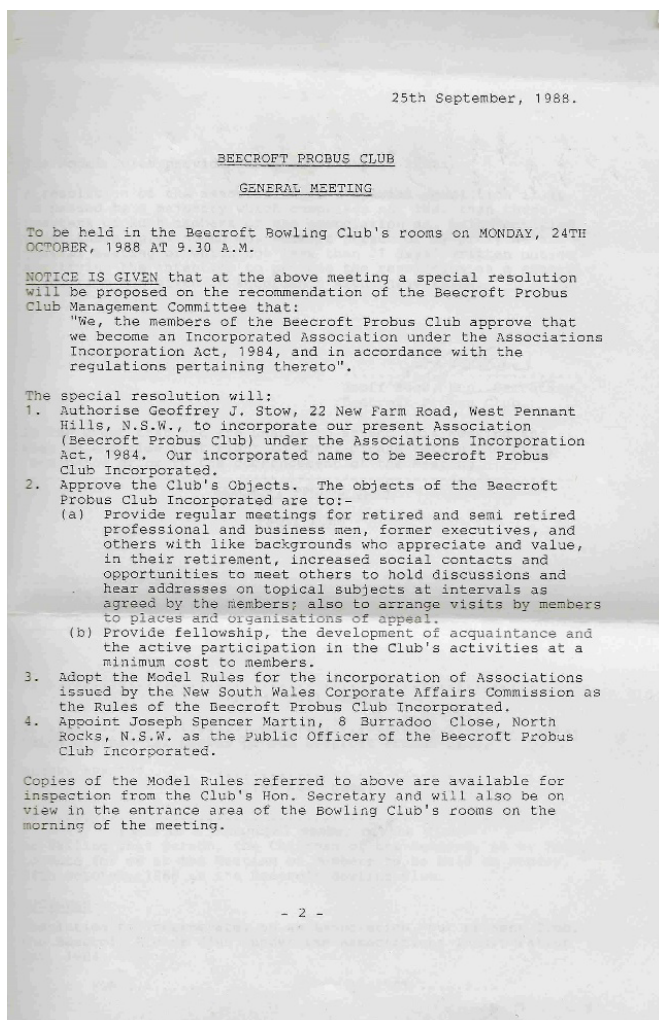
Chapter 8 Management matters

Club administration and constitutional provisions seldom affect the monthly running of a small organisation such as a Probus club, but it was essential to get the club's foundations right. Initially, this meant little more than establishing agreed procedures that ensured the smooth running of the club.

It took several years before the matter of legal liability of members was taken up. The question of incorporation was discussed for several months in 1988, and the Beecroft Probus Club drew heavily on the wisdom and experience of John Goldsmith, a solicitor and a member of the Beecroft Rotary Club, holding the classification of legal practitioner. Known to this writer in another sphere of life, John, ably supported by his wife Carolyn, was a friendly, gentle man who went out of his way to assist others. He was supportive, but not overbearing, omniscient, or dictatorial. In this context, he was the ideal adviser. The legal term *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) certainly applies. In August 1988 he attended a meeting of the Probus club to explain why it was advisable, indeed necessary, to apply for incorporation. The minute reads that he 'spoke to the members and answered questions on the reasons for and against the Club becoming incorporated. Following his talk, the members present decided to apply to the Corporate Affairs Commission for the reservation of the name of "Beecroft Probus Club Incorporated." '.

The required Special General Meeting took place prior to the regular meeting on 17 October, with 48 members present. The motion placed before the meeting read, 'We, the members of the Beecroft Probus Club approve that we become an Incorporated Association under the Associations Incorporation Act, 1984, and in accordance with the regulations pertaining thereto.' The motion passed 46 to 1, with another member not

voting. Not everyone was interested, the meetings on either side of this meeting had more than 50 present. No doubt advised by John Goldsmith, the meeting also adopted the club's objects, as required by the Act.



On 21 November 1988 there was correspondence from the Probus South Pacific Centre, established some years earlier in 1981. It had been set up by the Governors of Rotary Districts in Australia and New Zealand as a community service activity of Rotary clubs to encourage Rotary clubs in both countries to

sponsor the establishment of Probus clubs throughout the region. However, the Beecroft Probus Club, seeing this as a means of control by a centralised bureaucracy, responded tartly. The minute of their reply reads, ‘The members requested that the Centre be informed that “This club does not wish to become a Rotary type club or belong to a Rotary type organisation. They are quite happy to proceed as in the past, abiding by the present objects of Probus.” ’

This may refer to the way in which Rotary International had become highly organised, even hierarchical, with numerous Districts, each with a District Governor, to whom each club within the District was answerable. It took some years before a stable relationship was established with the Probus South Pacific Centre, the Probus club coming to see the advantages of the services it offered. Apart from the important matter of insurance, the regular magazine came to be appreciated, and the links that were thus provided to a broader world of Probus clubs. Eventually, the Beecroft Probus Club became Probus South Pacific Club No. 50230, District 9685.

Some twenty years later, it became apparent that the Club’s constitution and Standing Rules no longer complied with revised legislation. On 27 November 2017, this matter was rectified by the adoption of a new Constitution and Standing Resolutions. It is important that the principal provisions of these documents should be set out in this history, because it not only defines the operations of the club, but also protects its members. It makes due provision for honorary and life members, a provision that the club has followed quite extensively, as the list at the end of this chapter indicates.

The constitution states as follows:

The PROBUS name and emblem are registered under the Australian and New Zealand Trade Marks Acts. They may be used only by Probus clubs, Probus Associations and other

bodies accredited by the Probus South Pacific Limited and they may not be used for any commercial purpose without the written approval of the Probus South Pacific Ltd.

To hold accreditation a Probus club must have been sponsored by a Rotary club and must adopt and comply with the bold and italic typeface wording of this constitution.

1. Title

The name of this club shall be Beecroft Probus Club Inc

2. Aims and objectives

a. The purpose of this club shall be to advance intellectual and cultural interests among adult persons who have retired or are semi-retired from their former occupations.

b. It will hold regular meetings and arrange activities to provide opportunities for fellowship, the development of acquaintance and social interaction.

c. It shall strive to be seen as a worthwhile organisation by the local community.

d. It shall be non-political and non-sectarian. It shall not endorse any candidate for public office and shall not take corporate action at any meeting with the intention of influencing the policies or decisions of governments; however the merits of any public question may be a subject of fair and intelligent study or discussion at a club meeting for the information of members.

e. It shall not be, or be seen to be, a fund raising body. The club by a majority decision of its members may engage in corporate projects for social benefit provided that any such activity shall not involve the raising of funds and provided that individual participation in any such project shall be entirely voluntary.

f. It shall not enter into any contract which involves the use of the Probus name or the Probus emblem without the prior written consent of the Probus South Pacific Ltd.

3. Membership

a. Membership of this club shall be open to retired and semi-retired professional and business people and others from any worthy vocation who appreciate and value opportunities for social contact with others in similar circumstances.

b. Membership of this club shall be primarily for residents of Beecroft and nearby suburbs.

c. Membership of this club shall consist of ordinary members as defined in clause 3(a) and non-subscribing members comprising Honorary Members, Life Members or Non-Active Members.

i. Honorary Members may be elected at the discretion of and on such terms as may be decided upon by a special resolution of members at a general meeting. Honorary Members shall not be required to pay membership subscriptions, shall not be eligible to hold office and shall not be entitled to vote but shall enjoy all other privileges of membership. The maximum number of Honorary Members shall be as decided by members at any general meeting.

ii. Life Membership may be conferred upon a member who has rendered outstanding service to the club. Nominations shall be submitted in writing to the Management Committee for consideration, and if approved, referred to the next general meeting of the club for confirmation by a special resolution of members. Life Members shall not be required to pay membership subscriptions but shall enjoy all other privileges of membership. The maximum number of Life Members shall be as decided by members at any general meeting.

iii. Non Active Membership may be conferred by the Management Committee upon a member who because of illness or a physical disability has been granted leave of absence by the club, such members shall not be included in the member number of the club during that period of absence. Non-financial membership may be granted to Non Active Members, no maximum number of such members being applicable.

d. The maximum number of ordinary members shall be decided by members at an annual general meeting.

e. Applicants for membership must be sponsored by two members of the club and approved for membership by a majority of the Management Committee.

f. No person shall be denied membership of the club for reasons of race, religion, or political persuasion.

Other matters set in detail include management, the election of the Committee, the conduct of meetings, subscriptions, finance and the duties of officers, together with such mandatory provisions as dealing with disputes and the discipline of members – very rarely if ever used, but essential to include in such a document.

Similarly, the Standing Resolutions, adopted on the same day ensured that the regular meetings of the club should be properly conducted. They reflected the committee structure that had been in place for some time and had been developed over a period of many years. These resolutions both reflect and define the way the club operates. Only the first five of nineteen clauses are set out here.

1. The Club shall be managed by a Management Committee, comprising a President, one or more Vice Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer (collectively “Committee Members”), and members to be responsible for Outings, Speakers, Membership, and Probity and such number of other

members as may be decided from time to time by the Club (collectively “Officers”). The Immediate Past President shall be a member ex-officio of the Committee and shall be responsible for Health.

2. The Secretary shall be the Club’s Public Officer and shall be responsible for the lodgement of the forms required by the NSW Office of Fair Trading.
3. The Club shall meet monthly.
4. The maximum membership of the Club shall be 80.
5. The Club shall hold a mid-year “Presidents Luncheon” in June and a Christmas Luncheon in December in lieu of the normal meetings.

In cold print such provisions may seem officious, even peremptory, but they reflect a quiet, friendly method of operation that has taken forty years to build up.

Beecroft Men's Probus Club Inc. Honorary & Life Members

Eldred (Ted) Baker	Honorary Member January 1988
Don Bartho	Honorary Member November 2010
Stuart Braga	Life Member April 2021
Max Brochie	Honorary Member August 1998
Ken Brown	Honorary Member January 2000
Stanley (Bill) Burney	Honorary Member November 1997
John Clough	Life Member November 2017
Les Faulks	Honorary Member January 2001
Torres Ferres	Honorary Member January 1997
Don Gale	Life Member August 2006
George Greenwood	Honorary Member September 1997
Graham Henry	Life Member April 2021
Tom Hilditch	Honorary Member August 1998
Noel Hodgkins	Honorary Member July 1995
Wal Johnston	Honorary Member July 2006 Life Member August 2006
Alan Judson	Honorary Member August 2003 Life Member August 2006
James Lindsay	Honorary Member October 1999
Trevor McCaskill	Life Member November 2017
Don McCord	Honorary Member February 1995
Major (Jack) McDonald	Honorary Member January 1988
Leonard (Mitch) Mitchell	Honorary Member July 1995
Percy Mulligan	Honorary Member September 1997
Ray Newman	Honorary Member April 2006
Albert Prince	Honorary Member February 1996
Doug Pulsford	Honorary Member February 2003
Don Richmond	Honorary Member August 2000
Les Snape	Honorary Member May 2000
Bert Stoddart	Honorary Member February 2010
Gordon Taylor	Honorary Member February 2001
Edward Thompson	Honorary Member December 1989
Reg Turner	Life Member August 2006

Pat Whalan	Life Member September 2011
Tom Whittaker	Life Member July 2008
Allan Wight	Honorary Member March 2000
Trevor Williams	Life Member May 2012

Chapter 9 The Wine Group and the Lifestyle Forum

Over the years, and with a steadily changing community, different interests began to be catered for. Often this was through the programme of talks, always well planned and designed to be of continuing interest to members, but two activities produced long-lasting and specialised groups. The first of these was the Wine Group.

The Wine Group

Steve Bakoss

For the last ten years the Beecroft Probus Club has had a Wine Tasting Group which has conducted four or five tastings per year. The establishment of the Wine Group in 2009-10 typifies the friendly collaborative ways in which our Probus Club operates. As Peter Ditzell who was the President in 2009-2010 remembers it, he was impressed to receive a beautifully handwritten letter from Bob Adcock, a long-standing and esteemed member of the club, saying that he had attended a Rotary wine tasting function which he enjoyed very much and recommended that our Probus club should run similar wine tastings as some of our members would enjoy the convivial, friendly fellowship that such functions can provide. Peter shared Bob's enthusiasm about wine tasting and felt that they would complement the club's programme of activities.

Peter, impressed by the meticulous calligraphy of Bob's note, sent a cursively handwritten response stating that he had asked two 'volunteers', Ray Kidd and Harry Maltman, to implement Bob's suggestion. No 'Head-hunter or Executive Search Company' could have found a more qualified and experienced

duo than Ray and Harry to organise and run our club's wine tasting programme.

We were very fortunate indeed to have two very keen members, especially a renowned authority on wine, Raymond Kidd.

Following his service in the RAAF late in World War II, Ray abandoned his plan to study engineering at Adelaide. Instead he opted to study oenology and viticulture at Roseworthy, graduating in early 1949. He then joined Lindemans as a winemaker at Corowa and moved to Sydney as cellar master in 1951.



Ray Kidd

In 1953 Ray initiated and subsequently led the development of Ben Ean Moselle, which became the most commercially successful table-wine in Australia and played a pivotal role in converting Australia's sweet sherry drinkers to drinking table wines during the post war era. Ray was appointed Director and General Manager of Lindemans in 1962 and Managing Director in 1968. Ray ran Lindemans from 1962 to 1986. Under his leadership Lindemans vastly increased the area of its vineyards and its wine production until, for a considerable period, every third bottle of white wine sold in Australia was made by Lindemans.

Ray is recognised as one of the pioneers and strategic innovators of the Australian wine industry. The iconic Coonawarra trio of single vineyard Cabernet and blends developed during Ray's tenure are widely considered best to express the characteristics that underpin Coonawarra's high international reputation.

The second great enthusiast for wine and a man with a profound knowledge of the subject was Harry Maltman. After completing his schooling in Queensland, Harry took up a two-year traineeship with BHP. Based on his performance, the company

awarded him a scholarship to study Chemical Engineering at the University of NSW. After graduating with an honours degree, Harry was offered a full-time cadetship to gain experience at all of BHP's Australian production departments. It also encompassed a year's secondment in England.

During his stay in Newcastle Harry adopted the habit of many Novocastrians to visit the nearby Hunter River wine region frequently. He not only learnt a great deal about the region's wines but also got to know some of the region's wine makers. More importantly this sparked Harry's life-long interest in wine.

If Harry took something on he did it with enthusiasm and whole-hearted commitment. This was exemplified by completing an economics degree at Newcastle University while concurrently discharging the responsibilities of an intensive full-time cadetship. Throughout his working life Harry was closely involved with the Australian Coal Preparation Society as Treasurer and as Chairman and was the Australian delegate on the International Coal Preparation Congress for eight years. The ICPC is the pre-eminent forum on the state of the coal industry and on the science and technology relating to coal.

Harry's extraordinary capacity to keep many balls in the air successfully at once is also exemplified by how he was able not only to maintain his interest in sport at a recreational level, but that he also participated at an 'A' grade level in cricket, rugby, tennis and squash, alongside the demands of a professional career.

Harry has been an active member of the Beecroft Probus Club since 2004 and has held the positions of Vice-President, President, Immediate Past President and Treasurer, and has acted as the wine club's treasurer since its inception.

In the light of the interests and backgrounds of Ray Kidd and Harry Maltman, it is not surprising that the programme of four

or five wine tastings per year which they commenced in 2010, turned out to be a fascinating, informative exploration of Australian wines, and to be events of convivial fellowship. For the first five years, the tastings were held at Ray and Diana's Beecroft home. From 2015 the tastings were held at the Beecroft Bowling Club. Each tasting had a theme and involved eight to ten wines.

Recent tastings included:

- Five chardonnays and five cabernet sauvignons from Margaret River,
- Australian cool climate wines - six whites and four pinot noirs,
- Five premium rieslings and four shirazes from the Clare Valley

The cost of participating varied somewhat depending on the wines tasted and on the number of participants but was generally less than half the price of a drinkable wine in a restaurant.

Regrettably, the timing of the resumption of the wine-tasting programme could not be determined at the end of 2020. It necessarily depended on the consensus of the club that we could fully comply with medical advice and fulfil all the mandated measures, including any relevant regulations imposed by Probus South Pacific, to mitigate the Covid-related health risks.

The Wine Group

An additional note

The author of the demi-chapter on the wine group has modestly refrained from mentioning his own important role in it. As he has written in high terms about Ray Kidd and Harry Maltman, it is only proper to set his contribution into its proper context as

Steve Bakoss has done with the two leaders about whom he has written. Steve was for many years one of the leaders in New South Wales of the profession of civil engineering. He is Emeritus Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Technology, Sydney, where following eight years of experience working in industry as a design, construction and consulting engineer he taught structural engineering for 30 years. He was a Member of the Governing Council of the University of Technology from 2002 to 2006.

The Beecroft Probus Club is fortunate to count Steve among its members. We are also fortunate that Steve is a keen and very knowledgeable lover of fine wines. As Ray Kidd has reduced his input recently after many years of wise leadership, Steve in collaboration with founding member Harry Maltman has taken up a large part of the task, very much to the benefit of all members of the Wine Group. He has brought to it the same degree of professionalism, expertise and care that have characterised his career at the UTS. He has written well-presented tasting notes for several years and made careful selections of interesting wines from most of the wine regions of Australia.

Stuart Braga

The Lifestyle Forum

Robin Graham

Membership recruitment, adding another point of difference to the Beecroft Probus offerings and raising the club's profile in the community were high on Robin Graham's priorities as the club's president in 2018.

At that time the club had a strong and loyal membership of 68 with 19 new members joining in the previous two years. It

operated however as one of a few men-only clubs in a competitive Probus environment of twenty-three clubs within ten kilometers of its home at the Beecroft Bowling Club.

The target market for member recruitment was men in the 65-75 age bracket, with partners considered a valuable addition to a possible new mixed activity. In a number of discussions over coffee with club member Geoff Ashton, there appeared to be an opportunity to establish a unique “investment club” with a focus on finance, health and lifestyle issues of particular interest to that cohort. This concept was later called the Lifestyle Forum.

Geoff and Robin were also mindful of the fact that, while the retirement age was still 65 or thereabouts, many of us were living into our 90s with the question of what we were going to do with the extra couple of decades; perhaps more importantly how were we going to ensure that we enjoyed the journey: would our money last; would our bodies (and our minds) last; did we have the financial and estate planning fundamentals in place; perhaps more fundamentally did we have a purpose in life.

It was hoped that the incorporation of these themes would attract both existing members of the club (and importantly their partners) in addition to the target market of younger men and their partners. It was also hoped that the concept would be of interest to members of the Beecroft Bowling Club and to Beecroft Ladies Probus, and the project was initially launched as an initiative “in conjunction with” these two clubs.

To promote the intended interactive, informal and relaxed ambience of the meetings, it was decided to include snacks and a drink for a small admission fee. This would enable the activity to be revenue neutral and at the same time cover the costs of hall hire and gifts to speakers.

Geoff’s background was in executive positions in Monier and later Clyde Industries, and subsequently as Chairman of

Leighton Holdings, Sydney Ferries and Australian Super. Robin had an operational and education bent as Operations Manager of The Property Council and General Manager of the commercial arm of the Graduate School of Management at Macquarie University. Ross Johnson soon joined the group to look after the admin activity; Ross had held senior positions with the PNG Government and later in finance and administration with Standards Australia.

The first forum was held at the Beecroft Bowling Club on 12 February 2019 with the topic “Will my money last”; the bi-line read: “Are you contemplating retirement – or retired? How do you take stock of your present situation? What options, approaches and responses should you be taking to optimise your lives in the years ahead? Are you sufficiently knowledgeable and well organized to cope with the unexpected?” These were key themes of the overall concept of the activity and were well presented by two leading financial advisers. Subsequent topics have included:

“Aged care – it’s complicated. You are fit, healthy and enjoying retirement; why should you be thinking about aged care now?”
“Travel tips for savvy seniors. Travel options are increasing by the day. How to find the gems and avoid the pitfalls for those who have been there and done most other things”.
“The economy – where to from here for retirees. Major recession indicators are painting a dire picture for economic growth in 2019. How to cut through the hype and focus on what actually matters for your portfolios”
“Ageing better – recipes for body and mind. As we move into our later years, our health and our minds will be the ultimate retirement wild cards”.

Attendances at forum meetings were steadily improving from 48 to 78 in this period, against an initial target of 80, with increasing support from the Beecroft Bowling Club and from neighbouring probus clubs.

The intervention of COVID-19 resulted in the program being inactive for the whole of 2020. During this time Geoff, Robin and Ross decided to focus future topics on the likely new lifestyles that retirees will be experiencing after the pandemic – our social engagement, our communication, our outlook on health and accommodation, our finances and our holiday destinations. The intention was to select speakers at the top of their game.

The relaunch was held in February 2021 at the Cheltenham Recreation Club with a double-header: “The new normal – looking after me” and “Avoiding seven deadly Estate Planning mistakes”.

Future topics planned include:

“Covid vaccinations – have I, should I, and what next?”

“How is your legacy looking”

“Vacations and travel in a post-Covid world”

“Investing for income”

“A fresh outlook on health for retirees”

“Downsizing or staying put”

“The new normal – technology and social media”

Monthly newsletters have supported the forum’s activities, and two ASX competitions have been run concurrently with the forums with more to follow once the post Covid relaunch has settled down.

While there is no direct evidence of member recruitment from the forums, a brief survey of members in October 2020 showed positive results for both the forum’s concept and program delivery supporting a number of intangible benefits to the club from the activity. Focussed as it is on topics of direct importance to members, the Investment Forum has a promising future.

Chapter 10 Coping with Covid

It is impossible to record the final year of the 40 years history of Beecroft Probus Club without recounting some of the circumstances of the year 2020. While it was an unforgettable year, it was at the same time a year that everyone would prefer to forget but cannot.

It was a year that changed everything for everyone. There was a whole new vocabulary. Terms like ‘social distancing’, ‘masking up’, ‘social isolation’, ‘Covid safe’, ‘lockdown’, ‘border closure’, ‘community transmission’, ‘second wave’, ‘quarantine hotel’ and ‘income support’ became common. As medical knowledge increased, ‘contact tracing’ became important. ‘Pandemic’ had been an obsolete word briefly used a century earlier, but it made an unwelcome come back. The idea of ‘working from home’ would have seemed absurd at the beginning of 2020. So too would be the idea of a colossal federal budget deficit that would reverse all previous planning. The closing not only of Australia’s borders, but most state borders too at various times would have seemed unbelievable. Handshakes have been a customary method of greeting since ancient times, but in 2020, the handshake was replaced by the elbow bump almost everywhere. We discovered QR codes, Zoom and other once esoteric marvels.

What was at first thought to be a dangerous but distant problem suddenly became a universal nightmare on 11 March when the World Health Organisation declared a pandemic. Australia closed its borders to non-residents soon afterwards on 20 March. Australians overseas hastened back while they could. By the end of the year more than 400,000 had returned. Within a short space of time the names ‘Ruby Princess’ and ‘Newmarch House’ became infamous and almost synonymous with death on a large scale. The Victorian experience later in

the year was far worse. The Australian community effectively shut down, with most social gatherings coming to an end. Tourism collapsed. In these devastating circumstances it is interesting and very encouraging to see how the Beecroft Probus Club responded to a unique challenge.

Plans for 2020 were laid out in the first ‘Probitas’ for the year by the President, John Rogers. There was an attractive programme of speakers, including people who were obvious experts in their field, including Bill Phippen, with a vast fund of stories and photographs on the Hawkesbury River Rail Bridge, at the time of its construction the greatest piece of engineering infrastructure in Australia. This was followed at the end of February by a very well planned and executed panel of four speakers from the club, led first by Trevor McCaskill, then John Clough on ‘The Ghosts of War’.



John Clough

John spoke of his long interest in the hasty deployment of Squadron 22, a squadron of Australian-assembled Douglas A-20 Boston bombers to Port Moresby to the Battle of the Bismarck Sea at the beginning of March 1943. Squadron 22 became the most decorated RAAF squadron in the Pacific War. John’s talk was followed by club members Merv Trevaskis and Ross Johnson giving their own special perspectives on a remarkable episode in the history of World War II, an edited version of the recovery and subsequent restoration of two crashed ‘Bostons’ which had for 44 years been in the jungles of Papua New Guinea. These planes were carefully restored by RAAF technicians.

This was to have been followed on 23 March by Graham Sims, a distinguished speaker, on the intriguing Sydney identity ‘Arthur Stace – The Eternity Man’. However, the sudden shutdown meant that Eternity was postponed for a year. The Wine Group outlined its plans for the year, and the popular Investment Forum convened by Robin Graham and Geoff Ashton had arranged for prominent and experienced experts to talk about estate planning and investing for income, both vital topics for retirees. There would be outings to interesting places. The first was Newcastle, last visited by the club some years before. Since then the controversial light rail project had opened. Later in the year would be Hyde Park Barracks, also reopened recently after multi-million dollar renovations. The programme of talks was particularly interesting. ‘Saving the White Rhino’ was scheduled for April and ‘Humanitarian Emergencies and Refugees, an International Perspective’ for July. That would conclude the Probus year 2019-2020 and the indefatigable presidency of John Rogers. It had been a good year and it was sure to be a good year ahead in 2020-2021 with Charles Mackowski as President.

Within a few days of the closing of Australia’s borders on 20 March, social distancing rules were imposed and state governments started to close ‘non-essential services’, which included social gathering venues such as pubs and clubs. The Annual General Meeting could not be held, but John Rogers handed over to Charles Mackowski as Acting President. Charles had no alternative but to cancel all upcoming events at least to the end of May 2020. Later events were placed on hold, pending progress made in stemming the Covid-19 pandemic. In his final letter to members, John expressed everybody’s hope that the lockdown would be quite brief. He wrote, ‘There is no certainty as to when we may meet again for our regular meetings, forums, lunches, wine club, outings or the informal gatherings enjoyed by members. Many Probus clubs have decided on total closure until some normality is restored.’

He added, ‘your committee views Beecroft Probus Club as a tighter knit group and our prime objective at this time is to maintain strong communication between members during the period of social isolation.’ This was to be the guiding principle for a difficult year. Meeting on 7 April, the committee considered issuing a fortnightly mini-‘Probitas’. The first issue came out later that month on 27 April. It perhaps unknowingly gave an indication of what was to come. It bore the sub-title ‘Covid-19 Lockdown (a)’. Within less than a year, these emergency editions had come close to the end of the alphabet. Unfolding events were to demonstrate the wisdom of this decision.

Two days later, on 29 April came another issue of ‘Probitas’, sub-titled ‘Covid-19 Lockdown (b)’. This showed that the committee realised how important it was to keep members informed. Charles Mackowski as Acting President took decisive action. He wrote, ‘at its meeting of 20th April (convened on Zoom) the Acting Management Committee determined the following acting positions (apart from myself): Phil Sharp (Vice President), Rob Spencer (Secretary), Bill Rankine (Treasurer), John Rogers (Immediate Past President & Health), John Meikle (Probitas), Brian Sugden (Speakers), Warren Duff (Membership), Peter Holst (Outings) and Ian Wilson (Committee member). In addition Robin Graham will be coordinating the Lifestyle Forum program.’ Steady as she goes.

The bright and breezy tone of the ‘Covid-safe’ ‘Probitas’ in the hands of John Meikle as editor was at once apparent. John wrote, ‘I attach the second Probitas for this month. While we are all locked up we are going to try to issue Probitas twice a month. I am the new Acting Editor. Members’ contributions welcome.’ Members at once responded. Ian Beazley wrote of the war service of his father, David Beazley, in 30 Squadron and later in 31 Squadron RAAF, flying Beaufighters. They took

part in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea as one of the 12 attacking Beaufighters. Ian explained his own powerful commitment as President of 31 Squadron Beaufighter Association. Naturally, he has for a number of years attended the anniversary of the Bismarck Sea Battle each year at Richmond RAAF base.

Charles wrote, ‘the Management Committee was determined to keep abreast of the rapidly changing situation, meeting approximately fortnightly on Zoom although these meetings progress rather swiftly with few matters to deal with.’ There was already a plan to develop the club’s website, so this obviously became a priority. There was still the possibility of lifting Covid-19 restrictions on group meetings, as there was a widespread expectation that the pandemic would be short-lived. An excellent decision was that each club member would receive a phone call from a member of the club’s management committee to find out their attitude to Probus meetings starting up again. This personal contact was the ideal way to keep members interested, connected and warmly positive.

The Lifestyle Forum confirmed its intention to add to its lifestyle, finance and travel themes a stream of topics on lessons learned and consequences anticipated from lockdown experiences. It faced the reality that for many people, isolation and the unravelling economic situation had challenged their fundamental optimism about the world. It asked the question, ‘when Covid-19 has done with us, what will the new normal be and how will we retirees be coping, and with what perspectives’. It made the important point that the Forum was also an initiative to promote the club’s profile within the Beecroft and surrounding communities and from this to attract new members to core Probus activities.

Each issue of the Covid Lockdown ‘Probitas’ gave quite a different offering from its predecessors for the previous 38 years. Members contributed a variety of personal reminiscences, bits and pieces of local history, book reviews of

books pertinent to the current lockdown, stories from the writers' earlier life – sometimes sixty years earlier. Most issues contained information about the Lifestyle Forum, keeping its programme well in the mind of members.

In May, plans were made for the holding of the Annual General Meeting in July. The Acting President warned, 'There will not be a meeting in June'. That meant the cancellation of the Presidents Luncheon that had been held since the club began. He added, 'Our meetings starting up again will be constrained by what the Bowling Club allows and what we as a group accept of ourselves'. Initially, this seemed to be achievable as the number of cases throughout the country fell from about 350 per day in late March to about 20 per day by the end of April. However, a second wave, especially deadly in Victoria, meant that state governments kept 'non-essential services' closed. These included venues for social gathering such as pubs and clubs, so the hopes for an early resumption of the regular meetings of the Lifestyle Forum and the Wine Group were dashed. In the event, no meetings of either group were held until the New Year.

'Probitas' pressed on with interesting Covid editions. John Meikle continued to request articles. 'I know you have all had interesting lives and that many of you have been to places that lesser mortals have scarcely heard of. Think out of the square – a book review might occur to you or a wine review. People might be interested in what goes on in your Men's Shed.' In response, members supplied a wide variety of articles. There was one about the lost World War I Memorial at Normanhurst station. Who would have thought that anyone would know about various obscure memorial seats and benches scattered around Beecroft and Cheltenham? Ross Walker did. The Lifestyle Forum continued to be upbeat. 'It need not be all gloom and doom. As we know only too well, time for retirees is precious and we must take stock of ourselves and our

priorities in the new normal, and the new ways in which we might spend the rest of our lives.’ Well said.

Ray Rogerson wrote two intriguing articles. The first dealt with the quarry once operated by the Martin Family of Beecroft. At that time sandstone blocks were widely used in the foundations of houses and were all hand cut and trimmed on site and then transported by horse and dray up the two-wheeled track that is now Midson Road. Ray finished his article with an astonishing photograph of Mr and Mrs Martin with their fourteen sons and one daughter all lined up. It is a long line. Ray, who keeps abreast of modern technology more capably than most of us do, also wrote a long article on Elon Musk, abbreviated for ‘Probitas’. Inspired by this, Graham Henry wrote some time later a fascinating and beautifully illustrated story about the two homes he had lived in in Beecroft for a period of more than fifty years since 1966.

We were fortunate enough to meet again, socially distanced, on 27 July, when guest speaker Ray Dearlove described his passion for white rhino conservation since childhood in South Africa and his subsequent life in Australia since the early 1980s. At last the Annual General Meeting, delayed since March, could be held, and the Acting office-bearers were no longer Acting.

The situation in Melbourne and the growing numbers of Sydney ‘clusters’ continued to be of concern. President Charles Mackowski pointed out that it was not our decision whether to meet again. The Beecroft Club, i.e. the Bowling Club, was concerned about community virus transmission to its members from groups such as ours who met in their premises. Accordingly, plans to meet in August had to be cancelled. It was, wrote President Charles, ‘a subdued result’.

As well as including members’ contributions, John Meikle provided witty fillers in each issue of ‘Probitas’, which was always bright and breezy. In addition he included, as he put it,

‘some puzzles to keep the brains of the Probitas readership active. Most of these have had a mathematical theme of some sort.’ They built up to a mathematical puzzle for which he provided two solutions, one by Rob Spencer, the other by his own grandson. Rightly, he observed on 26 August, ‘after the great challenge of the triangle puzzle, it is time now to provide for those whose intellects lean more to the verbal than the mathematical.’ There followed a literary challenge, matched by a poem about an unexploded mortar bomb found on (or perhaps beneath) a quiet Beecroft street.

Ian Wilson shared the story of the French explorer La Perouse, as he was drawn to it because La Perouse was one of the few Pacific explorers who did not claim the places he discovered for his King. Was this why there is a crater on the moon named after La Perouse? The French have not yet claimed the moon. Meanwhile, Rob Spencer contributed a very well informed piece on DNA.

This club was determined, not only to survive, but to prosper. The President wrote on 23 September, ‘Our club Management Committee continues to function through Zoom, telephone and sub-groups and our plans for meetings and other activities are definite, but they continue to be subject to short-notice cancellation for the foreseeable future.’ However, the planned monthly meeting did take place on 29 September. It might have been thought that a talk on Rookwood Cemetery might be rather gloomy, even macabre, but it turned out to be a very entertaining talk.

By then, six months after the initial lockdown in March, there was much more mobility in the community, but the club could still not serve a cup of morning tea or coffee. At Easter, in mid-April, the roads were eerily empty, but most of the traffic was back by October. Accordingly, the long-planned outing to Windsor took place late in the month, to the relief of those who attended, and in particular to the relief of the outings co-

ordinator, Peter Holst, whose plans for 2020 had been so badly hampered. 'It was', wrote Peter, 'an interesting day with something for everybody and a chance to talk face to face with people for a change.' Also in October, John Meikle established, with the genial quirkiness that has adorned all his issues of 'Probitas', that Hell has frozen over.

'Back to normal' was almost complete when Tom Switzer returned in November for his third visit to the club. This very able, experienced and knowledgeable speaker had valuable insights into the Trump-Biden US election and the world economic and political situation post-Covid. This was particularly important coming as it did just a few days after the presidential election that gripped the world.

The fine programme of speakers that Brian Sugden arranged for 2020 concluded with David Rosenberg, November's speaker. David worked for the United States National Security Agency for 23 years, completing his last 18 years with the Agency at Pine Gap near Alice Springs. In 2018 his book, "Pine Gap: The Inside Story of the NSA in Australia" was published. It details the intelligence collection mission at Pine Gap and the partnership between Australia and the United States that has made Pine Gap the most important satellite ground site in the Intelligence Community. Not surprisingly, there was a long queue of members lined up afterwards to buy a copy.

The first of the two issues of 'Probitas' for November not only foreshadowed the talk on Pine Gap, but appropriately included another fine article by Ray Rogerson, who asked, 'Do you really want to go to Mars?' Ray's wide range of interests and his ability to share them in a very interesting way became one of the highlights of this challenging year with several stimulating, well researched and up-to-date articles. Perhaps it was appropriate that this article was accompanied by one from the editor's pen entitled 'Replica of the Wright Flier Model A'. In less than 120 years, discussion of powered flight has moved

from its beginnings to serious preparations for inter-planetary travel. The editor, John Meikle, commented in September, 'It is hard for the editor-in-isolation to judge what interests the membership most'. Without question, he carried out superbly and almost single-handed the challenging task of keeping the club together at a time when social groups of all kinds, even families, were unable to meet face to face.

So 2020 finished on a high note, with the Christmas Luncheon attended by 88 people, almost as many as in a normal year. Beth Mathews spoke about the Parramatta Female Factory - a factory mainly producing textiles and textile products from about 1820 to 1847, operated by convict women 'waiting for assignment' or obtaining a 'ticket of leave' for good behaviour. She recounted the life histories of several individual inmates. This was particularly interesting for the many of those present who had ancestors associated with the factory. As always, the chief interest about an institution lies in the people more than the place.

It was largely due to the dynamic leadership of the two presidents and their strong committees that year that 2020 turned out to be such a positive year. Looking back over forty years since 1981, that has always been true. Not only they, but many other members were resolved to keep the club strong and focused. One of the club's aims set out in its constitution said it simply. 'It shall strive to be seen as a worthwhile organisation by the local community.'

Men to Remember

Profiles of thirteen people whose fellowship we enjoyed

Ron Adams

Ron Adams was born in Brunswick and lived in Brighton, Victoria, during his youth. He attended Melbourne Boys' High School before moving to Sydney to work with Victor Leggo, a manufacturer of a range of products including condiments, preserves and canned foods. As war loomed, he became a member of the CMF, and on 14 August 1942 he joined the 2nd A.I.F. with the Service Number NX103001. He was posted to the 2/2 Anti-Aircraft Regiment, serving in New Guinea. All Anti-Aircraft units required close attention to detail, pin-point accuracy, very careful training and disciplined teamwork. Ron took these qualities with him for the next sixty years. During active service he rose to the rank of Major. On discharge he returned to Melbourne and married Joy, a war widow, in 1947. Ron then commenced accountancy studies part-time which introduced him to a fifty-four-year career as a professional accountant.

His military experience and professional qualifications combined well to hasten his progress through business management ranks to become the manager of Kyabram Preserving Co., then a large fruit-preserving plant in Melbourne. In 1965 Ron and his family transferred to Sydney and became residents of Beecroft. Ron was appointed to a senior role at Warburton-Franki, then a major manufacturer of refrigerators and other electric equipment. Ron retired from Warburton-Franki in 1983. Not one to remain idle, he joined the Beecroft Probus Club in April 1984. He immediately accepted the position of auditor for four years, followed by five years'

service as treasurer, then returning to the auditor's role from 1993 to 2006. Ron was awarded Life Membership by a very appreciative Beecroft Probus Club on 31 March 2008. His other activities included active membership of Beecroft Uniting Church, 50 years membership of the RSL, voluntary work for the Glaucoma Foundation and a passion for history. In 1993 he was a co-author of Noel Hill's *Expose! A history of searchlights in World War II*, a thorough history of the 34 searchlight batteries that were raised in Australia from 1938 and then during World War II and located in many strategic places. Everything Ron did he did well, quietly and thoroughly. He made a difference to everything he touched, including this club, of which he was a member for 24 years.

Robert Adcock



If ever there was a man held in affection and esteem by everyone who knew him, it was Bob Adcock, because people mattered to him; he appreciated them and went out of his way to be friendly and supportive. Still more, he brought out the best in them.

Bob was educated at Hurlstone Agricultural High School and Hawkesbury Agricultural College. He enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force early in World War II, and was one of several thousand airmen who were part of the Empire Air Training Scheme, training initially in Temora and later in Canada, then serving as a Lancaster bomber pilot. In war and peace, Bob was a fine leader of men, and his service in both was whole-hearted and self-sacrificing.

On his return to Australia he went farming in Glenorie before joining his family's workwear clothing business, KingGee. The company's name was a whimsical nod to royalty, but it is hard to imagine the original King George wearing work overalls. Bob joined the firm in the early fifties, later becoming Managing Director. The company's website shows the influence of its long-time boss.

“The original KingGee overall was born out of humble beginnings and was the first in a long line of work garments

known for their quality and careful craftsmanship”. Well said, Bob. He retired from KingGee in 1988 and joined the Beecroft Probus Club in 2001. He was a keen member of the Wine Club which held its first meeting in 2010 and in which he maintained an active interest almost until his death in April 2019.

A countryman at heart, Bob had a Charolais stud at Bungendore. This French breed tends to be large-muscled, with both bulls and cows weighing up to 900 kg. That was more than ten times the weight of Bob, who was a slight man. Although introduced to Australia since World War II, Charolais are now one of the most important beef breeds in Australia. Bob was an active member of the Charolais Society of Australia.

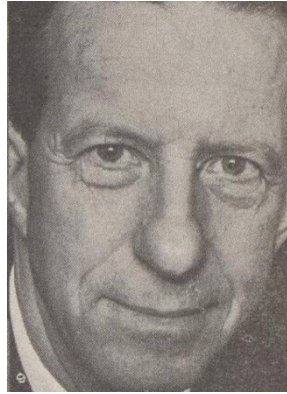
Bob was active in all manner of community interests. He was a Charter (i.e. foundation) Member and Past President of the Rotary Club of Beecroft, established in 1971. He gave powerful support to all its projects, especially the annual Red Shield Appeal. He was made a Paul Harris Fellow for his eminent services. A further, quite rare, distinction was also given when a diamond was added to his PHF badge, indicating that a further donation had been made to the Rotary Foundation in his honour. He was a member for sixty years of Lodge Beecroft, and a member of Pennant Hills Golf Club. Less well known is the strong support he gave to Tara Anglican School for Girls, of which he was a Council member for many years. Bob was responsible for setting up the Tara Foundation which helped to fund a new chapel and multi-purpose hall because of his far-sighted vision. Bob was also an active member of St Matthew’s Church, West Pennant Hills.

When Bob and Dorothy sold their farm at Dural, they moved closer in. They built a very pleasant housing estate aptly known as ‘Camelot’, the name of the mythical court of King Arthur and a symbol of chivalric romance. It was a place of serenity, happiness and contentment. Those were Bob’s qualities in a nutshell.

Ron Cull

Second on the list of presidents of Beecroft Probus Club is the name of Ron Cull, whose name appears twice.

This was because soon after the club was set up, it adopted the practice of Rotary in changing over its president in mid-year. Quite apart from that, our first president was a truly illustrious man, one who made a massive contribution to the community.



Ron Cull

Like most members of the Beecroft Probus Club, Ron was a long-time Beecroft resident. He spent his entire career as a teacher with the NSW Education Dept., for many years at the Blackfriars Correspondence School. He wrote twenty-one Science textbooks between the middle 1960s and 1991, mainly for upper secondary Science students to assist them with the higher standards required by the Wyndham Scheme and the new Higher School Certificate, first examined in 1967. All were substantial books of between 250 and 340 pages published by well-recognised publishers including Jacaranda Press and Longman Cheshire. Their titles reveal their well-directed focus.

There were four volumes in a series entitled *Concepts of Science*, one of which was also published in braille. Another series of four was *Investigations in Science*. A series of three for junior secondary school students was *Science for Living*; these had a companion volume of teachers notes. Specially intended for the new HSC and published in 1967 was *Objective Tests in Science for Third Level N.S.W. Higher School Certificate*. Another series of three, *Science for Everyone*, was

designed for a wider readership, as were *Everyday Science* and *Science and the Environment of Man*.

Another three single books for senior secondary students were *Inventive Australians*, followed by *People, Science and Society* and *Science for Everyone*. His last book broke new ground: *Mining in Australia*, published in 1991 some years after his retirement.

As well as his enormous contribution to the teaching of Science, Ron was a key man in his profession. In 1970 he was one of the principal witnesses in 1970 in the Teachers' Federation's case before the Industrial Commission for a salary review.

Ron rose through the ranks at the 'Corro', as the Correspondence School was generally known, to become principal. This position required a finely-honed set of skills that went well beyond Ron's teacher-training with a Science degree. Most of the students were isolated children living in remote locations. Teachers had to encourage them to keep at their studies to maximize their opportunities. One spectacular but more recent example of the success of remote education is the present Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie University, Professor Bruce Downton, born in the small NSW town of Ivanhoe. Ron's role as principal was essentially to encourage the encouragers. In his long and illustrious career, Ron Cull did more than that; he was an ornament to the profession.

He and his wife Marie had two sons who both became doctors, one living in Canada. Retiring to Beecroft in the mid-1970s, Ron spent most of his remaining years, as many of us do, travelling, tending a fine garden and playing golf and bowls. When in Canada he was a keen fisherman, spending much of his time trout fishing. Ever the environmental scientist, he measured most of his catch and then returned the fish to the water. Later, their health failing, Ron and Marie went to Brisbane to be near their other son.

Harold Davis

Harold Davis enjoyed his involvement with community having lived in Pennant Hills for much of his life, and his involvement with Beecroft Probus Club, which he joined in 1990, was very much a highlight. Honorary membership accorded in September 2007 was an achievement of which he would remain very proud.

Harold was a General Practitioner in Pennant Hills for many years, firstly in practice with his father Clyde and later with other well-known and well-respected members of Beecroft Probus, John Hodgson and Tom Ross. The Beecroft community knew the Davis family well. Harold's mother Vera had been a long serving Associate President at Pennant Hills Golf Club and Harold was at one time a member of the Club for longer than anyone else. Both he and his wife Marj were significant contributors to the community.



Harold Davis

Harold attended Sydney Grammar and qualified as a medical practitioner at Sydney University in an accelerated course to produce doctors during World War II. He completed the course

and enlisted in May 1944. As a member of the 2nd AIF he served with the rank of captain in several postings in Darwin and New Guinea, then moving to the important No. 112 Australian General Hospital, Brisbane. Essentially a repatriation hospital, it had a capacity for about 1,600 patients and a staff of approximately 400 personnel. He continued as a Medical Officer here until 1947; it was vital work, as the end of the war left many soldiers returning from the Islands in need of continuing medical care.

For some years after the war, there were few established medical practices in the Pennant Hills area and in the early days Harold and Clyde had a satellite practice at Castle Hill. House calls to this remote area presented difficulties. These were overcome by the use of a pager which allowed Harold to avoid arriving back from the far reaches of the Hills district to find that he had to immediately return there for another house call. The original pager only alerted him to contact the surgery. Then began the search for a public phone to call home. This was often a challenge in what was then a sparsely populated district. Mobile phones, now ubiquitous, had not been invented, and the instant communication we now take for granted lay well into the future.

Harold studied in the UK in the 1960s to become a Member of the Royal College of Physicians. He had a special interest as a Chest Physician. With this special interest and qualification, he treated many people with tuberculosis, then still prevalent, and his practice included clinics at Parramatta Hospital and membership of the Honorary staff of Hornsby Hospital.

Harold's surgery, Hampden Clinic, was just across the road from the Pennant Hills Hotel but Harold determined that it was never a good idea to set foot in the hotel as he would surely find a number of patients there for whom he had just written a medical certificate for time off from their work. In those days, the local GP was a greatly respected member of the community

and Harold was extremely proud when he was asked as a speaker at Beecroft Probus to describe his experience through those days.

A wonderful family man and a great Rugby supporter, Harold was renowned for his ability to make conversation with absolutely anyone. He was interested in people and always enjoyed meeting others. He had all the attributes of a fine member of a Probus club.

Geoffrey Dobbin

Geoff Dobbin was a member of the Beecroft Probus Club for ten years from 2005 to 2015. He held no office, but quickly made his mark and was very much missed when he quietly left. He was not a demonstrative person, but a conversation with Geoff was always a delight. His courtly, old-fashioned manners were a glimpse into a more polite and gracious age that has almost gone. He always wore a blue jacket with silver buttons, a white shirt and a carefully chosen tie which gave him a distinguished presence.



Geoff Dobbin

Where he really shone was when he was asked to give some reminiscences of his long career in the merchant marine. These were filled with delightful stories of human foibles, strange events and coping with situations that we land-lubbers could hardly imagine. His career began, he told us, when he and another boy from Shore ran away, threw away their boaters, but were sent back to school by the captain of the first ship they tried to

join. It was faintly reminiscent of another Shore boy who left precipitously, the actor Errol Flynn, famously expelled for seducing one of the maids. That was not Geoff's style; he was ever the perfect gentleman in deed and manners.

Obviously, he succeeded at a later attempt to go to sea. You could rely upon it that a damsel in distress figured somewhere in every one of Geoff's talks. All was done with a dry humour and a ready wit. Geoff's dog figured too. He took it shopping every Saturday morning in Beecroft and it obediently sat outside the shops waiting for Geoff to return. In the Beecroft Probus Club Geoff Dobbin was one of a kind, and the club was the richer for his decade of fellowship.

Torres Ferres

William Ferres had a feeling for history. When his son was born in 1921, he named the boy Torres after the Spanish navigator Luís Vaz de Torres who was the first European to sail through Torres Strait in 1606 and perhaps the first European to set eyes on what two centuries became known as Australia. This was an omen. On the night of 5/6 September 1943, Flying Officer Torres Ferres was the Navigator, not of a sailing ship, but of Lancaster JA858 in Pathfinder Squadron 156.



Torres Ferres
Detail of an out of focus
snapshot of the aircrew
of Lancaster JA858

The task of Pathfinders was particularly dangerous, as by flying ahead of the main force and dropping flares to guide the rest of the strike force, they knew that they would be the first target for German night fighters and anti-aircraft gunfire. The main force, hundreds strong, had a much better chance of survival.

This raid, with 609 aircraft, brought together what was up to that time the largest force to engage in a bombing raid over Germany. The target was a large industrial plant at Mannheim. The mission was successful in damaging the factory severely, but 34 planes did not return. There were, according to the air crew's later report, hundreds of searchlights. One of the planes lost was Lancaster JA858, which was attacked by a night fighter at 18,000 feet, and was immediately set ablaze. The seven crew bailed out but two were killed. The five survivors were rounded

up by the Germans soon after daylight. F/O Ferres was sent later that day to identify the bodies.

He was then sent to the infamous Stalag Luft 3, a camp for RAF officers, where on 25 March 1944 76 prisoners escaped. 73 were recaptured, and an enraged Hitler ordered that all were to be shot. Ultimately, 23 were allowed to live. Ferres was not part of the escape plan. A year later, in April 1945, he was part of the large group who were forced to march in freezing conditions for several days with little food and no shelter as the German army retreated. They were eventually liberated by an advancing British force a few days before the German surrender. Meanwhile, he had been promoted Flight Lieutenant while a POW. He returned to Australia on 8 August, and just ten days later married his fiancée, Jean.

Before the war, Torres had been a junior clerk in the Department of Trade and Customs. After his return from Active Service, he had a long career with its successor, the Department of Customs and Excise, rising to the position of Inspector of Appraisals before retiring in 1978. Like many young retirees in that era, he was a keen bowler. Torres also joined Beecroft Probus Club in 1985 and was Editor of 'Probitas' from 1988 to 1995, retiring after 7 ½ years and 91 issues. No later editor has exceeded this long service record.

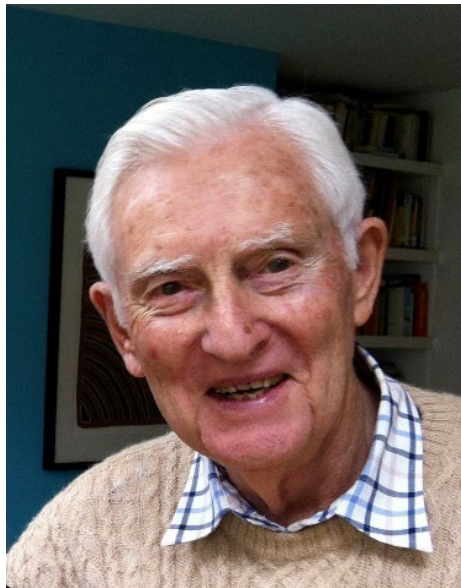
This short sketch of Torres should finish as it began, with his war service. The issue of 'Probitas' for July 1994 reported, 'Torres Ferres gave an amusing and interesting account of what must have been a very harrowing experience when he was shot down in World War 2.' Like so many war veterans, he only wanted to remember the good times, but made this one exception to tell the club about that night of crisis and the dreary, cold and hungry months of captivity that followed. He is unlikely to have told them that he had been given the hard task of identifying the bodies of his fellow crew members, knowing that he too could easily have been killed a few hours

earlier. To make an amusing and interesting account of his experiences as a POW suggests a man of considerable fortitude. Not surprisingly, the club made him an Honorary Member in February 1996 towards the end of his 13 years of membership, in recognition, not only of his long service to the club, but also of a very friendly man they had all come to respect.

Harry Learoyd

Everyone who knew Harry thinks at once of an engaging man with a wonderful sense of humour who had a real sparkle to him. He had no sense of self-importance, despite an eminent career, and had the gift of treating everyone as important to him. He had a distinguished career at school and university, and then went through the demanding years of junior medical practice as a resident medical officer, latterly at Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital as Senior Medical Officer.

A medical colleague and long-time friend, Mark Killingback, wrote his memoirs 'Scribe with a Scalpel' in 2017, and recalled a hilarious Christmas concert there in 1954.



“The idea of an end of year concert was enthusiastically received, particularly by Dr Dick Geeves who was MC. The concert took place in the nurses’ quarters close to Xmas in front of a ‘full house’. [We] performed a mini-musical entitled

‘Operation’ in which an operating team carried out a cholecystectomy [surgical removal of the gall bladder] whilst singing a song with lyrics we had composed. As we extracted ‘tissue’ from the patient we flung ‘gallstones’ here and there. Our second item was a song and dance routine entitled ‘Mark and Harry’ which we sang in neck-to-knee bathing costumes (one with horizontal red stripes, I recall), and straw boaters. The two songs were ‘If you knew Susie, like I know Susie. Oh! Oh! Oh! What a gal’ and ‘I do like to be beside the seaside’.

“We had a simple dance routine and had a few rehearsals. I was concerned during these rehearsals because Harry would occasionally forget a line or two of a song. On the night, Harry was word perfect, and I was the one who fumbled some lines! much to the amusement of the audience.”

Both Mark and Harry then went to England to gain their Fellowships of the Royal College of Surgeons. Returning to Australia, Mark becoming a pioneer colorectal surgeon and Harry a urologist. Self-deprecatingly, he said he was a glorified plumber. In fact, he became President of the Urological Society of Australasia, the leader of his profession. Harry was recognised as an excellent surgeon, always respectful of staff and colleagues. He cared deeply for his patients, gave them time and listened well. He was a great teacher and a fine mentor. Harry was noted for his friendly approach to all and had a remarkable capacity to make others feel welcome and at home. This friendly attitude was with him all his life.

Harry and his wife Janet lived at Cheltenham, where their home became the centre of enjoyable and stimulating activities for the children and their friends, with Harry as a present and involved father always ready to explore and discuss new ideas and exercise his sense of fun. As a grandfather in later years, he gathered children and grandchildren in the lounge room for comical situations and jokes they played on one another, so that family occasions were always looked forward to.

Upon retirement, Harry's life became busier than ever. Golf increased to two or three times a week, along with Bridge and frequent travel to visit family around the globe. When he and Janet moved to a unit at Wahroonga in 2010, he unsurprisingly became the unofficial raconteur and joke teller at Happy Hour each week. With his great sense of fun he would entertain friends and neighbours in a series of stories of funny occasions that kept his listeners enthralled.

Harry joined the Beecroft Men's Probus Club in 1997, serving as President from 2008-09. As a urologist, it amused him that when he put on the chain of office as President of Beecroft Probus Club in 2008, there was a large capital 'P' in the centre of the chain.

His year of office was memorable for several things. The monthly speakers were well selected, several excursions were well-attended, especially a highly successful trip to Cairns. Harry reported, 'twenty-seven of us had a most enjoyable and interesting week together'. Modestly, he gave all the credit to committee members, but his fine leadership of the club and the committee was the key to a very successful year. Members always left feeling that it had been a most enjoyable morning. Harry Learoyd was a man of warmth and humour, who lived generously and cared for others.

David McLeish

Dave McLeish was a man who was determined to make a difference. He had Scottish forebears who were forthright, honest, patriotic, brave, stubborn and courageous. They didn't like pretence; Dave inherited their characteristics. He was 88 when he joined the Beecroft Probus Club, and 94 when he moved to Canberra, hoping to establish a Probus Club where he lived, as he did not consider himself old, and had enjoyed the fellowship of the Beecroft Club.

Dave was a teenager during the Depression, a tough time for the McLeish family. Dave was unemployed for three years, but his mother provided stability: 'the Lord will provide'. Dave became an electrician by trade and joined the Electrical Trades Union, eventually becoming a legend of the union.

He joined the militia in 1937 and was posted to the South Head Searchlight Battery. Here he began his interest in workers' conditions. When war came close to Australia in 1941, Dave volunteered for the AIF and was posted to the workshops of the Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He went to Egypt on the 'Queen Elizabeth' and was put to work in the electrical section repairing vehicles. He never considered himself a soldier, but a tradesman in uniform. After Pearl Harbor, he was returned to Australia and sought to develop good relationships between his unit and the town of Muswellbrook where he had been posted. At the end of the war in 1945, he was sent to Singapore as part of the POW Reception Group, and was very opposed to a proposal (fortunately not implemented) to delay their repatriation until their physical condition had improved.

Working in Newcastle after the war, he had a passion as Industrial Officer to make the branch of the ETU a truly effective one for its members. Later as Secretary in Sydney, he

set up training courses for union officials at the Mount Eliza Staff College. He was a driving force for ordinary members and encouraged them to join Toastmasters to hone their leadership skills and to gain confidence in public speaking. Over the years, he occupied every elected position in the ETU, secured major benefits for members and was respected by employer organisations and the judiciary. In a trade with obvious hazards, he was especially concerned with health and safety.

In the broader community, Dave was a member of some thirty committees and organisations, including the Rotary Club of Sydney. He occupied senior positions including Chairman of the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority, member of the Council of the University of New South Wales and a director of the Australian Industrial Development Corporation. In 1982 he received the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to trade unionism.

At the 2001 Conference of the Australian Labor Party, some years after his retirement, Dave was made one of ten inaugural Life Members. Ten years later, in 2011, the Dave McLeish Scholarship was established for education and internship in the union movement.

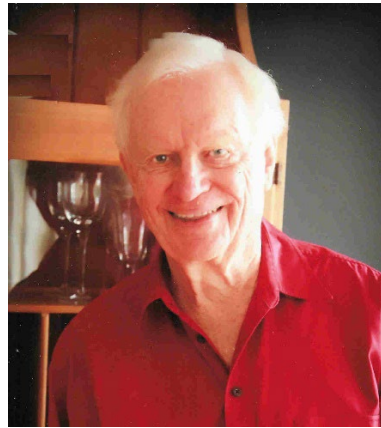
In retirement, Dave delighted in family history. He found that he came from generations of mole catchers. This odd occupation has existed for centuries to prevent an explosion in the British mole population which might ruin people's gardens. In his nineties he was an active user of email and used Facebook to follow the exploits of his grandchildren.

Joining the Beecroft Probus Club, Dave expected at once to find friendship and soon got to know most members. He came across, not as a typical tradie nor as a union boss, but as a fine human being, which is exactly what he was. Dave McLeish, a quiet, friendly man who expected friendship from others, himself gave it in abundance.

Charles Miller

Charles Miller, always known as Charlie, joined Beecroft Probus Club in January 2009 and died in 2016. Although well into his eighties when he joined the Club, Charlie Miller was determined to pull his weight. He did much more than that. He at once took on the position of Secretary, always a busy and demanding job. He then became Vice-President and President within the next two years. Members of the committee had to live up to his expectations!

As President, the skills he had developed in a long career as a fine manager with a most careful grasp of detail remained with him. His paper work was meticulously accurate. He conducted meetings with experience. Nothing escaped his notice, and he gave the club the benefit of his experience and wisdom in full measure. He carried out the many and varied responsibilities of his roles in a collaborative, constructive way with an inclusive friendly attitude and respect for the views of the members of the Committee. His experience of serving on committees and occupying leadership positions was clear in the way he chaired the Committee and the meetings of the Club. He considered the program of outings and social activities to be of pivotal importance to fulfilling the goals of Probus.



Charlie Miller

He developed new initiatives and sought out the right people to carry them out. He was concerned to ensure that the club's

constitution was being adhered to, to the letter. He maintained a good rapport with Probus South Pacific and the president of the Beecroft Bowling Club, our meeting place. We had a monthly barbecue, for which Charlie provided the necessary supplies. These get-togethers greatly enhanced relationships. Always with a long-term vision, he discussed the club's future leadership with the incoming president, keen that the club would continue to grow and prosper with the right people running it. He had a flair for picking the right person. 'He's the stand-out', said Charlie of the member he wanted to wear the President's chain two years hence. Charlie was not a man to rust out. In everything he turned his hand to, he made a difference.

John Noble

Few people have done more for their local community than John Noble did; nobody has done more than he did for Beecroft. He was a true Beecroft legend. He and his wife Grace moved here in 1949, and instead of clearing their heavily timbered block and planting grass, they decided to leave the trees. They had long been keen bushwalkers, members of the Wildlife Preservation Society and the Sydney Bush Walkers.

When the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust was formed in 1964, John and another famous local identity, Marie Byles, became members of the first committee, keen to promote the preservation of the local bushland. In 1965 John formed the first bush regeneration group, which worked along Devlins Creek until 1969 and then John continued to work in the bush on his own for many years.

He later inspired the formation of a new group that used methods he developed which are now emulated throughout Hornsby Shire in their bushcare programme. He found that the people of Beecroft became more supportive over the years of community efforts to improve the condition of the local bushland.

John also turned his attention to Observatory Park, the triangle of land at the intersection of Pennant Hills Rd and Beecroft Rd. He observed that there were still surviving native plants, including orchids, close to trees, despite regular mowing of most of the park. John wrote to the Council seeking their support to regenerate a section of the park and to cease mowing that area. He began, two or three times a week, to remove weeds in the section set aside for regeneration and persevered despite opposition from some people who thought it looked untidy. John continued to work alone until a new volunteer group formed to help him in 1997 when he was aged 81. The number

of species listed in the park increased rapidly from 45 in 1988 to over 115 in 1999 when the area under regeneration was expanded. Observatory Park is now recognised as an important remnant of critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest. In 1999 he was made a life member of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust, and in 2005 a plaque was placed in Observatory Park by the Trust to honour his work.

John also had a keen interest in photography. He contributed photographs and assisted with illustrations for the Beecroft Cheltenham History Group's magnificent local history, 'Beecroft and Cheltenham: the shaping of a Sydney community to 1914'. While gathering information, he and Trevor McCaskill, who led the Group, spent a morning going to various parts of Beecroft bushland for a good photograph of the natural landscape of Beecroft to be used in the book. They were crossing Devlins Creek when John lost his footing on a slippery rock in the middle of the creek and fell flat on his back in midstream. He was not injured and Trevor helped him back on his feet. The camera was undamaged, for Trevor added, 'a photo he took that morning is on page 19 of the History'.

In the 1990s his interest in photography led him to send one of his photographs of a beautiful huntsman spider to the Australian Museum. This led to a fruitful relationship, and John, as an official collector for the Museum, began sending in specimens of spiders collected on his own block, where he counted 200 different species. Among them were many that had not previously been identified.

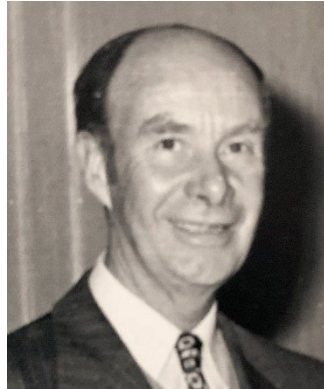
John joined the Beecroft Probus Club in November 1982, soon after its foundation, and continued until September 2007 when he resigned at the age of 91. He never held office in nearly 25 years of membership. However, it was typical of him to join an organisation that brought people together for the good of the community.

John described himself modestly as a man with ‘an ongoing interest in things of nature and the need for care of our environment’. His quiet determination to enhance and preserve the natural environment has left Beecroft with a wonderful legacy. Noble by name and noble by deed, John lived for 95 rewarding years, undoubtedly inspiring many others to value and preserve our bushland heritage.

Vernon Rouvray

Vern spent his early years in Albury, attending Albury High School. In 1936 the family moved to Mosman where Vern played cricket and baseball for the Mosman clubs and enjoyed swimming and dancing. Employment was difficult in the Depression and he worked temporary jobs before securing a clerical position with the permanent army in 1939, based on his typing and office skills for which he had undertaken a course. With these needed to support the growing AIF, he enlisted in 1941. He served with the 9th Division in 2/1 Aust. Field Workshops at El Alamein and later in similar supply units in New Guinea and Borneo.

Vern found settling back to civilian life difficult. He acquired a peach orchard at Moorebank but it struggled financially. He married Margaret in 1949 and after the arrival of two boys they purchased a small mixed business in Cabramatta West in 1953. Over time, and with changing patterns of retailing, they built this into a supermarket, while becoming well-respected members of what



Vernon Rouvray

was a developing mixed migrant community. Later, Vern became a member of the administrative team at Macquarie University, making many friends among the staff and students with his friendly and helpful manner, before retiring in 1979.

He was an inaugural member of the Beecroft Probus Club, one of the group who joined on 31 August 1981. Early issues of 'Probitas' show Vern as an active member who became Publicity Officer. 'Probitas' for March 1984 records with a

playful dig, 'A note has arrived from Publicity Officer Rouvray. We think the same was written with a thumbnail dipped in tar. It seems he's in the country, but we don't know where he are.' Later that year, Vern and Margaret moved to the Central Coast. Vern had enjoyed his time as a member of the Beecroft Probus Club, so he joined the East Gosford Probus Club and made his mark also in St David's Church, Avoca Beach, for the following thirteen years.

Tom Whittaker

An unforgettable character in the long history of Beecroft Probus Club was Tom Whittaker. Tom was not a man to fade quietly into the background in any situation. A tall man with a commanding presence, he loved to hold the floor with well-told anecdotes in season and out of season. He entertained the club throughout his sixteen years as a member, and would have been disappointed if the opportunity had been denied him. Much of his fund of tales waiting to be told came from a long career as a marine engineer. Engine rooms seem to generate stories as well as steam.



Tom Whittaker

In youth, Tom was a rampaging representative Rugby Union fullback, as were his son and grandson. His long career as a marine engineer came later. Back on land, he became involved in building and maintaining hospitals in Australia and overseas. Westmead was one of them. He went to Dubai and other places in this capacity.

Tom joined the club in 1993 and threw himself into its activities. Between 1995 and 2002, he was first a committee member, then Secretary, Vice-President, President in 2000-2001 and finally Immediate Past President. A contemporary in the club, Tom Ross, wrote, “He was a delightful man with a charming wife, always good company, possessed an impish sense of humour, plus of course he was an outstanding raconteur, ready to ‘fill a gap’ with a new story.” He was fond of making his mark. On one notable occasion he did this in

spectacular fashion. Tom collapsed and was taken to hospital by ambulance. At the next meeting, President Derick Smith told him with mock severity, “Don’t do it again”. This time, Tom enjoyed the attention.

In declining health, Tom resigned in April 2008. However, he was held in such high regard that he was at once made a Life Member in July. He was soon back at the microphone. The President’s annual report noted the next March, “Life Member Tom Whittaker entertained us with some of his seafaring stories”. However, that was the last of his many contributions; Tom died soon afterwards in June 2009, still a member.

Trevor Williams

Trevor Williams was a member of the Beecroft Probus Club for the unusually long time of 26 years. He joined the club in August 1991, was made an honorary member in 2004 and died in April 2017. Throughout that time strongly supported other members. He contributed greatly to the Club's community life and for over six years willingly served in various positions on the committee. He was President in 1997-98.



Trevor Williams

and their families. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1999 “for service to veterans and their families, particularly through Legacy and the Returned and Services League of Australia.” He was a man of selfless service.

Born in 1921, Trevor volunteered for the Second AIF while still in his teens. Thereafter he identified himself closely with army life and his fellow ex-servicemen. It was an attachment that continued when he returned to civilian life and lasted for the rest of his life in an active association with Legacy and the RSL. After his retirement he continued to work tirelessly for the welfare of returned soldiers



**Beecroft Home Soil
of WW1 Servicemen
is held here**

FORTY YEARS OF FELLOWSHIP - BEECROFT MEN'S PROBUS CLUB 1981-2021

