

## **CHAIRMAN'S NOTES.**

It was a year or so after I had retired that a friend encouraged me to join Probus: he would propose my application and a near neighbour would, I felt sure, second it. The neighbour had mentioned more than once how much he had enjoyed Probus lunches. It then transpired that my neighbour was not a member, but had been a guest at lunches of the Probus Club (of Orpington). He did however introduce me to another neighbour, who was a Probus member, and who invited me to coffee one Saturday morning. We had a chat about this and that and nothing in particular, after which he said he said that he could see no reason why he should not second my application.

My experience of joining Probus reminded me of an occasion when I was still working and had signed a contract with a firm in Czechoslovakia in the days when the Communist party was still in power. As the agreement needed to be confirmed by the political secretary I was invited to his spacious offices overlooking an elegant park above the Danube. We had a chat about this and that and nothing in particular, after which he said that he could see no reason why he should not confirm the agreement I had signed!

Not long after joining Probus in 1994 I was asked whether I would like to be a cashier. Yes, I said fairly readily. Then I was asked whether I would be willing to be the next lunch secretary from 1997. Yes, I said but this time after a slight hesitation, and I continued in that role until 2001. I was proposed as vice chairman from 2005 and this led in due course to being elected as chairman in 2009.

An essential piece of equipment used by the chairman at the monthly lunches is the rosewood gavel or chairman's mallet that was presented to the club by Ian Audsley. He had turned it himself on a lathe which had belonged to his grandfather. According to one of our after-lunch speakers when the chairman uses the gavel to call for order "You can hear a pin drop". Ian was one of the two original Probus secretaries, having been appointed by the Sevenoaks Rotary Club and it is of course to the Rotary that Probus owes its origin.

Much of what is expected of the chairman is unwritten. It is well known that he is expected to say a few words – and not much more – at the summer party and the annual dinner. But if he goes to the dinner on the last night of the spring walking safari or the Alfriston walking safari and is told "The chairman usually says a few words." he should be warned that the walkers expect rather more than a few words after their substantial dinner! If the chairman is able to oblige he is congratulated "on his speech".

In saying that it has been an honour and a privilege to have served as your Chairman for the year 2009/2010 I am echoing the words of many of my predecessors. Over the years Probus has introduced me to many new friends and especially so over the past 12 months. I have enjoyed my year and the pleasure has been enhanced by the tremendous support I have received from

the members and especially from the officers of the Club who serve on the Committee and the organisers of the Club's numerous activities. In spite of fluctuations in our membership numbers in recent years the Probus Club of Sevenoaks is still, to the best of my knowledge, the largest and certainly the friendliest Probus club in the country. I warmly welcome my successor and hope that he will enjoy his year as much as I have enjoyed mine.

Cecil Pedersen.