# Probus Club of Allander 2023 – 2024

**President William Ho**

**1. Subscription and coffee morning fee**

The annual subscription remained unchanged at £30 and the coffee morning coffee at £3 with £1 contributing to the Club's fund.

**2. Members who passed away this year**

William Docherty

Morton Fyfe

Alistair Galloway

Fred Lee

Jack Milroy

James Wilson

**3. Winners of Bowling and Golf competitions**

The Bowling competition was not held, but the Golf competition went ahead and was won by James Allan.

**4. List of talks for the season**

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| India - Past and present | Manjulika Singh |
| Queensferry Crossing Bridge | Lawrence Shackman/David Burt |
| Climate, Ecology, Energy, Pandemic<br>What is the problem? | Lam Chiu Ying - |
| Hidden Wall - Cyber security | Jamie Cuthbertson |
| International Supply Chain - a modern wonder<br>Structures and risks | Philip Chow |
| How intelligent is Artificial Intelligence:<br>Is it going to make us irrelevant? | Simmone Stumpf |
| Dementia: Plain and Simple | Donna McCallum |
| Scottish Air Ambulance Service | Gordon Drummond |
| The Roaring Game - Curling | Patrick Shaw |

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| The Scottish Malawi Partnership | Chad Morse |
| The book that has the most impact on my life | By 6 Members<br>Ken Muir<br>Frank Cruiskshank<br>Michael Hitchman<br>Mel Burt<br>Rob Littlejohn<br>Stephen Rodgers |

**5. Outings**

The Club successfully organised four outings in the season.

Lunch gathering at Priory Ross

A trip to the Bo'ness Railway

Kelvin Hall Museum

David Livingstone Birthplace Centre

**6. <u>President's Report 2024</u>**

Time flies. It seems just like yesterday that I stood here last year and said that we would walk together to tackle the challenges facing the Club. In a few minutes, this journey will come to an end. As I prepared this report, I wondered what I should write. It seems that there is little value in giving details about our talks and activities in this season as they have all been documented on our website. Therefore, I decided instead to say a few words on why we did what we did this year and how we have done.

I once attended a talk on space exploration and the speaker asked the audience the question 'why do we want to know where the earth is in the universe? How will you answer? His answer was: only when we know where we are, do we know where we want to go and how to go there. Somehow, his answer stuck in my mind. Since then, I always assess a situation first before I embark on an assignment or in simple English: Look before you leap. Therefore, before taking up my post as the pilot of the Spaceship Allander Probus, I charted its coordinates by reading its history, analysed its past talks, activities and membership and attendance development in the last few years. I made the following observations.

1. The pandemic lockdown period had quite a negative impact on our Club.
2. Our membership has been decreasing since 2019 because of few recruitments on one hand and many members passed away either due to covid or of sicknesses in addition to resignations. Another consequence is that our members' average age was increasing.

3. The attendance number when we resumed our off-line talks at Cairns Church had also dropped because of lower membership and some members tried to avoid gatherings. Thus the attendance rate last year had dropped to the mid 20s.
4. Reducing membership numbers pushed our finances to a critical position.
5. With few new members, our conveyor belt for officials was also broken. We were facing succession difficulties.

Therefore I thought that the major task for my term would be to increase the membership number and make attending our activities more attractive. To work on these objectives, several teams were set up right after the last AGM, such as the internal and external communication teams, the projector and sound system team, web-team and the catering team.

To increase the membership number, we have done the following.

- Publicised our Club by posting adverts in public places, in newsletters of several resident associations and in the Facebook page of the Bearsden Community. We also put an advert in the Community Magazine in July last year.
- We modernised our website with the hope that it can attract younger potential applicants who are more internet savvy. We also use it as a communication tool with our members. It actually becomes a central on-line archive for the Club's documents. Reports and photos for our talks, outings and other activities are also stored there.
- We participated at the Poppy Day event at Tesco Milngavie on 8 November 2023 and the Bearsden Fair on 24 September 2023 at the New Kilpatrick Church to increase our exposure.
- We met up with the officials from Antonine Probus and Allander Rotary to share ideas and resources as they were also facing recruitment difficulties.

To make activities more attractive, we tried to involve our members more closely.

- We sent monthly letters and regular reminders to all members to keep them informed of what we have been doing and what activities are coming up. With the help of John, we also carried out an informal survey with our members to find out what attracted them to Probus.
- We arranged talks that are more topical instead of Scottish history biassed as in the past, such as climate change, cyber security, dementia, artificial intelligence etc.
- We introduced some innovative approaches to our talks, such as delivering two of the talks on-line by experts from overseas, the first time ever done in Allander Probus. We invited the wives of our members to participate in three of our eleven talks.

Looking back at the last 12 months, I am quite happy about our achievements. We added 10 new members, almost double that of my original target. We increased the average attendance number from about 25 to 30 in this season's talks excluding visitors, higher if we count the visitors, e.g. we had a record number of 42 in the talk on dementia when 7 wives of our members were there. I am particularly pleased with our website. Through the hard work of

Stephen, we have now an easily editable site which is always up-to-date, with the unforeseen result that we do not have to publish the Bulletin nor have to update the archive anymore. With more members, the increased subscription has also restored the health of our finances. These new members are also new sources of potential new members through their connections.

I cannot finish this report without mentioning the activities organised by the club that were quite well received. On taking stock, we had been rather active this season. We had lunch at Ross Priory in early June, visited the Bo'ness Railway in late June 2023, the Kelvin Hall Museum in November 2023 and the David Livingstone Centre in February 2024 and finally we held a celebratory party on 11 April. Our traditional Christmas lunch with 58 attendees including 3 guests was a very joyous occasion. We organised an innovative Burns lunch when a Malaysian Chinese addressed the Haggis and recited an immortal Burns. Lastly, I should not forget to mention the Golf competition which was won by Jim.

At this point, I would like to thank all the committee members who contributed so much in this season, in particular Frank and Gil who keep the day to day operations running smoothly. They have been in their respective positions for quite a while. We have some preliminary discussions on who can succeed them in the next couple of years. We drafted a tentative succession plan that the next Committee will look at and work on. I thank Jim for doing a lot of work on publicity, Rob for offering valuable advice from his years of experience in the Committee and keeping us on track, Mel for arranging all the outings meticulously and Terry, Wyn, and Ken for preparing the coffee and tea breaks as well as the celebration party. Although Bob was not able to attend our committee meetings, he continued to provide very useful feedback through email. I would also like to thank our past presidents Stephen, for setting up and managing our website, and John for advising on the improvement of our audio and video systems. Thank Iain and Ken for doing the auditing work for our accounts. Finally, I have to thank you, our members, who have given their trust and support to the committee in the last 12 months. Although I have reached the destination of this journey, the whole experience of charting a course for the Club added another shade to the gamut of colours in my life which I enjoy and treasure a lot. With a much younger Jim as the pilot and with a younger new crew, I have no doubt that the spaceship Allander Probus will continue to fly high, and in Star Trek language, to boldly go where no Probus Club has gone before.

Thank you.

William Ho 25 April 2024