



WEST WORTHING

PROBUS CLUB

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PROBUS

A question people often ask is what does Probus stand for:

The name is an amalgam of the abbreviation of the words professional and business. Probus is also a Latin word meaning honest or virtuous, from which the English word “probity” is derived.

The Probus Club movement was formed in the United Kingdom in 1965 having its beginnings in two clubs, both created by members of Rotary.

It is widely acknowledged that Probus had its foundation in Welwyn Garden City over 50 years ago. It has now spread to many countries throughout the world and has been described by a member in Australia as the best thing England ever exported.

By 1965 the population of Welwyn Garden City had grown to about 40,000 and clubs and societies proliferated. Women and young people were well catered for, as were lovers of sport, music and the arts. Completely lacking were facilities for the increasing number of retired people.

A man called Fred Carnhill, who had moved to Welwyn Garden City eight years after its foundation, was an enthusiastic member of the local Rotary Club, but had retired and found a conspicuous lack of facilities for men in his situation.

Between an inspired idea and the establishment of a successful club lay a good deal of solid work. Mr Carnhill sought support from Rotary and was strongly supported by the Chairman of Welwyn Garden City Rotary.

After a preliminary meeting in April 1965, the first ‘proper’ meeting took place on May 6th with 33 members of the new club present, together with six members of Rotary.

A priority was the choice of a name. Suggestions included The West End, The Brethren, The Carnival and Regent. Finally the name ‘The Campus Club’ was chosen; The new club had no difficulty attracting members. Telephones rang and by the end of May membership had doubled and on June 3rd the first meeting, as a body separate from Rotary, was held at a venue in the pleasant town centre area of the ‘Campus’ in Welwyn Garden City..

Simple rules emerged, the most significant being the one that read: **“The object of the club shall be the promotion of good fellowship”**.

At the same time as these events were taking place, a man called Harold Blanchard and two of his friends were reaching the point of retirement and realised they would soon have time on their hands. They discussed the possibility of a luncheon club as a way of promoting fellowship and thus in the same time period, September 1965, Harold Blanchard, the chairman of Caterham Rotary Club Vocational Service Committee, presented the idea to the Rotary Club.

Following a letter to the Rotary International of Britain and Ireland (RIBI) Journal in 1966, describing the club, a great deal of interest was generated with enquiries coming from all over the length and breadth of the UK.

In May 1966 a committee was formed with Harold Blanchard as chairman. Its first task being to decide on a name for the newly formed club with Harold Blanchard as chairman. The name “Probus” had been suggested by a member who took the first three letters from ‘PROfessional and BUSiness’. After some discussion the committee decided the name of the club would be PROBUS



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The members of the Rotary Club Vocational Service Committee decided to organise a monthly lunch. In February 1966 a meeting was advertised for all retired professional and businessmen aged 60 and over. 42 men turned up. A monthly lunch was arranged, at which the Rotary Club president took the chair until the club had formed its own rules and committee. Thus the inaugural luncheon of the first Probud Club in the United Kingdom to use the name PROBUS was on March 2, 1966.

By 1971 about 150 Probud Clubs existed. Early clubs chose names such as Knife and Fork, Elevenses, Yesteryear and The Two XXs (ex-executives). The majority, however, adopted Probud. The first to do so was the Caterham club, founded by Mr Harold Blanchard and two fellow commuters, The event was also reported in the RIBI journal.

The Probud Club of Caterham was successful, and became known among other Rotary Clubs with new Probud clubs being founded, almost exclusively by Rotary Clubs, and today there are an estimated 1700 Probud Clubs in the UK. In some towns demand is so great there are several: Cheltenham for example has ten Probud Clubs.

In 1974 Probud expanded into New Zealand and by 1976 the idea had spread to Australia. The first Probud club for seniors in North America was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Galt in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada in 1987.

Although Probud membership has its greatest concentrations in Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, clubs today exist in all parts of the world, including the US, Belgium, India, Portugal, Holland, Germany, South Africa and several other countries in Africa and Asia.

Other countries have staffed headquarters to which clubs affiliate and which can impart advice and support. In the UK and Ireland it is seen as a strength of the Probud movement that there is no central organising body so each club sets its own rules, the watchword being informality.

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