



March 2026

G'day from the Land Down Under

I feel very privileged to have been given the opportunity to serve as President of PROBUS Global. Richard Furlong's shoes will be very hard to fill, but I will do my best with the help of our fellow Team members and webmaster Peter Jennings.

Serving as Australian Coordinator for a few years, I've enjoyed the friendship, fellowship and exchange of ideas that PROBUS Global provides, bridging cultures and languages in this global village.

As we approach the Autumn Equinox in the southern hemisphere, we are hoping here, down under, for some relief from what had been a very hot and dry summer; it reached 50°C in some places. Australia is a land of contrasts - severe flooding in the north, closest to the equator and drought and bush fires in the southern states.

I am reminded of a few lines from a lovely poem written by a young lady who had moved from England and settled in Australia called 'My Country'

'I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of rugged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains'

As your President, I will welcome suggestions on how we can expand the reach of PROBUS Global and spread the benefits of belonging to Probus and Probus Clubs all around this global village and help reduce the social isolation that faces so many people who retire from their workplace.

One of Richard's dreams, which I want to pursue is how we engage and accept membership enquiries from people who live in remote areas, countries or regions where there are no local Probus Clubs. Perhaps 'PROBUS Global E-Club' and dedicate a separate 'Chat Group' where members can chat among themselves – but also participate in the full range of services we offer.

Merv Richens

President Merv Richens OAM

'No flies on this man'!

Merv is a member of the Probus Club of Springwood. He has served the community as an active Rotarian since 1964 and is a Past District Governor, Paul Harris Fellow and Rotary Foundation Benefactor. He has served on a number of Rotary International committees and is still an active member of the Rotary Club of Loganholme. He has been actively involved with Probus for a number of years, being convener of the Probus Club of Goonellabah in NSW in 1993 and his present club, the Probus Club of Springwood in 2001. In recent years Merv has served as the Rotary District 9620 Probus Chairman (RDPC) and is currently the Probus District Chairman (PDC) in his area and has been involved with the formation of several new Clubs in Queensland.



He has been the Australian Coordinator for Probus Global for several years and a regular contributor to our newsletter. For his Community Volunteer work, Merv was awarded a 'Medal of the Order of Australia' (OAM) in 2019. Most of his working life has been involved with refrigeration and air conditioning contracting and he retains an interest in computing and the IT Industry.

Married to Margaret, who is also a Probian, they have three married children with 9 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren who all live close by and are an important part of their lives. They enjoy short excursions with their caravan and especially enjoy the fun, friendship and fellowship that Probus provides.

Merv has Welsh roots, a distant grandmother, Catherine Owens who emigrated to Australia in 1858 on the '*Grand Trianon*' a 996-tonne wooden barque built in 1854 in New Brunswick. It was used as a merchant vessel for transporting goods and emigrants, particularly on routes from Britain to Australia.

Editor's Note

As we are now well into 2026 it's almost too late to wish you all Happy New Year, but this greeting is traditionally added to Christmas greetings, which I sent to you in the December Newsletter.

From the number of activities that Clubs were involved with over the festive period, you clearly appeared to be well catered for judging by some of the images I received regarding food. From the Southern Hemisphere you enjoyed Christmas eating salad and prawns whilst watching England's humiliation during the Ashes Tests, which is something we have all gotten used to, whilst in the North, it was roast turkey, braving the storms and watching the gas and electric meters spin around in an effort to stay warm! But the beginning of Spring is now well underway, snowdrops and daffodils everywhere to brighten the spirit, so I shall indulge you in a little Welsh history.

In this March edition of the Newsletter, we celebrate two important events: Australia Day and St. David's Day.

Australia Day is the official national day of Australia on 26th January, and honours the establishment of the first permanent European settlement on the continent. On January 26, 1788, Arthur Phillip, who had sailed into what is now Sydney Cove with a shipload of convicts, hoisted

the British flag at the site; Probus Clubs will no doubt celebrate the National Day in style.



Lamingtons, the iconic Australian sponge cake dipped in chocolate and coconut, are available in the UK, launched in 2025 at Marks & Spencer.

While often associated with the Australian snack, the name originates from Lamington village in South Lanarkshire, Scotland, situated between Biggar and Lanark and sits astride the A702 trunk road. It is reputed to be the home of Marion Braidfute, legendary wife of William Wallace. The feudal barony of Lamington was granted to William de Baillie, 2nd of Hoprig, in 1368, who was the son-in-law of Sir William Seton. The caput of the barony was originally at Lamington Tower.

There is an ongoing debate about changing the date of Australia Day, as in 1994 it was declared a National Holiday to celebrate the landing of the first fleet in Sydney to establish the penal colony. In recent years the indigenous people have been calling it '*Invasion Day*'.

The eastern part of what is now Australia was then called New South Wales, but Arthur Philip did not originally call it that. He adopted the name given by Lieutenant James Cook, following his claim of the eastern coast in 1770. The name was chosen to reflect the likeness of the coastline of

South Wales, UK, with Cook initially considering 'New Wales' before settling on 'New South Wales', the western part of Australia was still called New Holland.

Australia was first formally recommended to replace 'New Holland' by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in December 1817 and was officially adopted by the British Admiralty in 1824, following advocacy by explorer Matthew Flinders. While the concept of *Terra Australis* (southern land) existed for centuries, it became the common name for the continent by the 1820s and 1830s.

Probus South Pacific will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and is an opportunity to attract new members by showcasing the benefits of joining Probus. A promotional and activities Kit has been created to make it easy for Clubs to share their own story - whether that's with local media, on social media, or within their community. It will include a range of ideas about how Clubs can celebrate our golden milestone throughout the year.

Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, has acknowledged the vital contribution of Probus across the country. Her Excellency states that *'As a community, you make a lasting contribution to wellbeing across cities, towns and regions nationwide. I have seen and continue to celebrate the profound impact of Probus in the lives of many of my family members, and in the communities I have visited across Australia.'*

So let us hope this has the desired effect and expands the excellent work that Probus does 'down-under'!

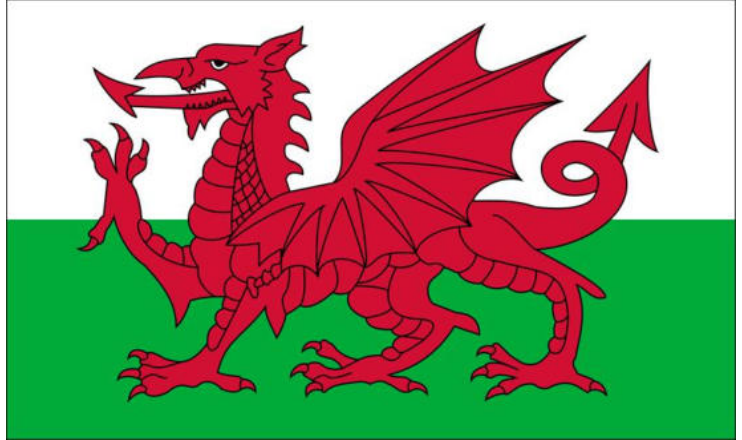
Now some interesting factoids have come my way and may be of interest to those of you in Australia:

- The name of the Capital City, Canberra, ACT, resulted from a competition; losing entries were, Democratia, Kangaremu and Australamooloo and many others. On 12th March 1913 the Governor-General's wife, Lady Denman, announced that Canberra was the name of Australia's new national capital.
- In Melbourne, singing an obscene ballad is punishable by six months in prison; Section 17 of the Summary Offences Act 1966 (Vic).
- In Queensland, it is illegal to keep a pet rabbit. There are heavy fines and a six-month jail sentence could be imposed on pet owners!
- In 1998, a Health and Safety report in Queensland advised against placing 'any part of one's body in the mouth of a crocodile!' The Workplace Health and Safety (Advisory Standards) Notice 1998.
- A 2013 survey found that 10% of Britons think that Australia is further away than the moon (doesn't surprise me)!
- The first and so far only female Premier of Australia, from 2010 – 2013, was Julia Gillard, born in 1961 in Barry, South Wales; the family moved to Adelaide in 1966 where she attended school and later University.

NEWS FROM WALES

St. David's Day, 'Dydd Gŵyl Dewi Hapus!' celebrates the Patron Saint of Wales, St. David, on 1st March. It is marked by many parades in Welsh towns and cities and children dressing in traditional costume and wearing daffodils and leeks, although it is not recognised as a public holiday here in the UK.

The United Kingdom also did not recognise the flag of Wales, until it was officially adopted in 1959 although a standard featuring the red dragon was used by Henry VII in 1485 when it was carried in State to St. Paul's Cathedral, London and a dragon added as a Supporter of the Tudor royal arms. The flags' colours of green and white are the colours of the House of Tudor that ruled Britain for 118 years with five monarchs: Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. Henry VII was born in



Pembroke Castle in 1457 and was the first Tudor monarch who founded the Tudor dynasty by defeating Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. He is Britain's only Welsh king, and his birth in the castle marked the beginning of a new era in English history. The Welsh flag does not form part of the 'Union Flag', also known as the 'Union Jack.'

The alternative explanation of the Welsh flag is that the white half at the top represents north Wales with its range of high snow-capped mountains, the bottom, green half, represents mid and south Wales with the verdant pasture lands that support cattle and sheep production and the interposed red dragon is illustrative of your mother-in-law!



ALAN QUINCEY a member of the Llandrindod Wells Proboscis Club was recently presented with Honorary Life membership for his support of the Club over many years. He joined in 2005 and was Chair in 2013-14 and gave many interesting talks and monologues. Born in Lincolnshire, England he was an artist and graphic designer by profession but both he and his daughter practise the art of Zentangle, a meditative art form using structured, repetitive patterns called 'tangles' to create beautiful, intricate designs on small squares, promoting relaxation, focus and mindfulness, accessible to everyone regardless of artistic skill.

NEWS FROM INDIA

Once again I received a news item from the President of the Probus Club of Chennai, India.

This was on the occasion of the Pongal Festival, when the Club organised a special function on 12th January at Gopalapuram Boys Higher Secondary School, Chennai, to celebrate the festival and honour excellence among students and scholars. The programme featured the presentation of the prestigious Probus Thirukkural Virudhu and the distribution of prizes to school students.



Probian M. Annadurai, President of the Probus Club of Chennai, presided over the function and delivered the welcome address. In his remarks, he highlighted the Club's ongoing commitment to social service, particularly in promoting the values of Thirukkural among students and the general public. As part of this annual initiative, the Club confers the Probus Thirukkural Virudhu on an individual who has made significant contributions to propagating Thirukkural, and also conducts essay and oratorical competitions for school students on Thirukkural-related themes. In addition, the Club selects one outstanding girl student and one boy student each year and presents them with wristwatches in recognition of their merit.

More than 60 members, students, and teachers participated in the programme, which concluded with the distribution of sweets. The event was compered by Dr. Bhavani, and the function ended with a vote of thanks proposed by Probian V. Ramaraj, Secretary of the Probus Club of Chennai.

The chief guest for the occasion was noted writer and founder of Indian Frontliners, Kuwait and Penakkal Peravai, Shri N. C. Mohan Das, who delivered a special address. The Probus Thirukkural Virudhu for the year was conferred on renowned Thirukkural scholar Shri M. Chakkaravarthi, in recognition of his dedicated efforts in spreading the teachings of the Thirukkural. Several prizes were distributed to students who excelled in the Thirukkural competitions, sponsored through the endowments instituted in memory of late Probians C. R. Vaideeswaran, V. Chandra, and Captain M. Singha Raja. Wristwatches were also presented to outstanding students by the family of late T. T. Srinivasa Murthy.

Editorial Note:

It's very encouraging to see that Probians continue to engage and involve themselves not just within their own Group but to a wider audience that encompasses the youth of today who, hopefully, will become the Probians of tomorrow.

The *Pongal Festival* is a very important event in the calendar and is a multi-day Hindu Festival that celebrates harvest and, according to tradition, the festival marks the end of the winter solstice,

and the start of the Sun's six-month-long journey northwards called *Uttarayana* when the Sun enters Capricorn.

NEWS FROM CANADA

I was invited to join a Zoom meeting on 9th December with the St. Catharines Club of Canada to listen to Hugh Gayler make a presentation on my pet interest, railways! Hugh alluded to the British phenomenon of 'trainspotting' amongst young boys to which I was a confessed participant and now author of railway books. I did the same journey as he did from Vancouver to Toronto on Via Rail some 25 years ago when I undertook a 5-week lecture tour of Canada and the USA, travelling first class of course with my own private room and totally agreed with him, the on-board food was superb! As the speaker said, delays are frequent due to the priority given to freight, whereas in the UK, passenger trains have priority over freight, which travels mainly in the night-time owing to a 98% capacity of available track access throughout the day on key commuter routes.

Whilst I was in Toronto, I was invited to stay for a few days with a Canadian/British family. The brother of the wife was a one-time player for the Toronto Blue Jays, who were playing the Boston Red Sox. We all went to the game, of course, in a VIP box with plenty of refreshments, can't remember who won though!

It appears that Hugh and myself have things in common, both from the UK, both Emeritus Professors and both studied at the London School of Economics.

How I celebrated Hogmanay on New Year's Eve

This lovely submission from Barrie Morgan at Probus-Guildwood resonated with me as did another Scottish ceremony, '*Burn's Night*', which celebrates Scottish Legend 'Robbie Burns' on 25th January. Burns Night traditions centre around a celebratory supper to honour Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, featuring haggis, neeps, and tatties, bagpipe music, recitals of his famous poems (like the Address to a Haggis), toasts, whisky, and concluding with 'Auld Lang Syne.'

Having been brought up in Northumberland England, just under the border with Scotland, we shared many of their likes and customs, such as bagpipes, haggis etc. One of the most practiced and enjoyed was that of celebrating 'Hogmanay' on New Years Eve. Hogmanay is the Scottish word for 'last day of the year' and it is also the origin of the custom to sing '*Auld Lang Syne*', which means 'old long since', or 'for the sake of old times'.

Also practiced is 'first footing' where immediately after midnight, the first person to enter a house was the 'first foot'. He or she would have a piece of coal and a small amount of sugar wrapped in

a piece of paper and step outside the home just before midnight, and when midnight arrived, they would knock or ring the doorbell and a guest would open the door and welcome the 'first foot'. In the days of open fires, the coal and sugar would be placed on the fire, the coal would symbolise heat and warmth, and the sugar would flare up in many colours to represent beautiful memories. A mandatory bottle or flask of Scotch would also be presented, to offer all those around a wee dram to toast in the new year with a hearty chorus of 'Auld Lang Syne', amid tears and hugs.



One of the treasures of this part of England is Lindisfarne Castle, on Holy Island. This island, off the northeast coast of England, which is cut-off twice a day by the rising tide, has a recorded history from the 6th century AD; it was an important centre of Celtic Christianity. The Monks of Holy Island made an alcoholic beverage known as 'Mead', which I bought on one of my many visits. The mead is fermented on the island in St. Aidan's Winery and was originally made by the monks around 600 A.D for medicinal purposes from honey and grapes.

In my opinion, the island has a magical atmosphere, and I have never failed to make a visit any time I have been back to Northumberland, it is a main item on my Bucket List, providing they are still selling 'Lindisfarne Mead'!

Cheers, hic!

- *Barrie Morgan*

Welcome the Niagara South Coast PROBUS Club

Clubs around the world are folding for lack of members and volunteers. The Niagara South Coast PROBUS Club welcomed **90 members** to their first official meeting. **William Thomas** explains how he pulled it off with the help of a few enthusiastic club founders.



I do humour, I had just finished giving my presentation in Collingwood, entitled ***You Might As Well Laugh, Nobody's Getting Out Of This One Alive*** and while signing copies of my last book, *And That's Why I Love Small Town Living*, when my genial host Craig Podborski mentioned there were Presidents of other Probus groups in the audience who would like to have me come back and speak to their clubs. I was told there were thirteen such Clubs in the Collingwood area but not one in my hometown of Port Colborne! So, much like England's Fred Carnhill, the man who spun off 'The Compass Club' from Rotary and founded Probus, I was a man on a mission.

Nobody in Niagara's southern tier appeared to have heard of Probus, few understood its simple beauty, camaraderie and curiosity, learning and connecting, friendship and fun. I began with meetings at the library, two of us, then ten of us and switched to the larger Guild Hall where forty potential members and board members was a thrill to see. But from there, with a lack of interest and commitment it gradually dwindled to half; I was ready to throw in the towel.

I would describe myself as a doer not a joiner, I was surprised at the number of people who just enjoy attending meetings... and doing nothing in between. I was disappointed in those who could not see the benefits to our community. I was shocked at how many would rather contract COVID than volunteer for a post!

Now down to ten meeting goers, from my July presentation in Collingwood to the twelfth meeting I arranged in mid September, I planned to announce it 'Quits.'

But I didn't get a chance. Suddenly their questions became more urgent and pertinent to the Probus movement. The conversations were animated, a few heated until finally, they got it! At that meeting, half of them agreed to assume lead roles, others promised serious consideration.

I announced the Club's creation through my weekly humour column in the three Niagara dailies and the public meeting was very well attended. Great, but I still didn't have a board of directors and I was short of about a dozen volunteers.

During the Q&A of my presentation, which did involve begging, a woman put her hand up to ask a question. I asked her to please stand and tell us her name, which she did very reluctantly. Ignoring her question, I asked the crowd to give it up for 'Terri – our new Probus Treasurer'! A big laugh and lots of applause, but guess what? Terri Bjerno is our new Treasurer. Her husband Lars is our Special Events Coordinator with 10 interest groups up and running and two special events in the works; all hail the power of humour.

The excitement of being part of something new and special spread and the rest, a bit bumpy at times, fell into place.

Lessons learned? Without volunteers our world would slowly stop working. The vast majority of people still do care for each other and many will work for the community's greater good. And anthropologist Margaret Mead was right all along when she said 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.'

- *William Thomas*

Editor's Note:

When I was teaching at the University in Sri Lanka, one of my colleagues had recently returned from an exchange to the University of Ottawa. He was in raptures about a new-found food that he had eaten called a 'bacon sandwich'. Bearing in mind that for 50 plus years his diet had consisted mainly of rice and curry, this was a revelation to him and thankfully he was Buddhist and not Muslim that he was able to enjoy this wonderful delicacy. Those of us who had worked at one time on building sites were brought up on a diet of bacon sandwiches, fish and chips, steak and kidney pie and chips, and Cornish pasties. This was not exactly Michelin Star stuff, but nevertheless gave us the calories to carry out hard, manual work in freezing temperatures installing gas pipes and fittings! So how to make the perfect bacon sandwich? This was the advice from the internet:

What kind of bacon to use?

For a bacon sarnie it's **back bacon** over streaky bacon, you still get the nice crispy part of the tail, but more of the meat with the medallion. In terms of smoked vs unsmoked, **I highly recommend smoked**. You're just missing out on flavour otherwise! Remember, bacon is the only main ingredient here, let it shine!

How to cook bacon?

Pan frying gives you more control over the texture as opposed to baking. I recommend maintaining a **medium heat** as you fry. Too high and the fat won't render down, too low and the meat won't caramelize. Whilst I'm usually a fan of ultra crispy bacon, I recommend frying the bacon until it's **mostly crispy**. Enough to render down and crisp up the fat, but not so much the bacon shrinks into oblivion. You want some of that meaty texture.



How many slices of bacon should be in a bacon sandwich?

4 slices of bacon per sandwich. Hear me out – remember the bacon shrinks, and 4 slices means two per side for a square slice of bread.

Best bread for a bacon sandwich?

Thick soft white sandwich bread. Wholemeal bread is criminal and seeded bread is just distracting. A bacon butty is unhealthy, don't pretend otherwise.

Should you toast a bacon sandwich? No, NEVER

What's the best sauce for a bacon sandwich?

Traditionally it's **ketchup**, and that's my sauce of choice. Brown sauce is acceptable, but in my eyes that belongs with a sausage sandwich. As for mustard, chilli sauce, BBQ sauce or mayonnaise – pack it in, immediately.

Do you put butter on a bacon sandwich?

It's called a bacon butty for a reason! Do not hold back on the butter – yes, butter both slices and don't look back. Also make sure it's proper butter (not margarine).

Serving a Bacon Sandwich

Do you need anything with a bacon sandwich? A **cup of tea**, that's it. The bacon sandwich is the main event, don't mask it.



Further News from Canada

Members of 3 Probus Clubs, namely; The Probus Club of Toronto Waterfront, The Probus Club of Richmond Hill and the Probus Club of Bradford, Ontario proudly took part in the annual Toronto Santa Claus Parade, November 23rd, showing that seniors play an active and vibrant role in our community. Their enthusiasm, energy, and willingness to bundle up and join the fun demonstrated that age is no barrier to participation. Whether it's supporting local events, volunteering, or simply spreading holiday cheer, our members continue to lead by example, proving that staying engaged keeps us young at heart.

Photo of the Month



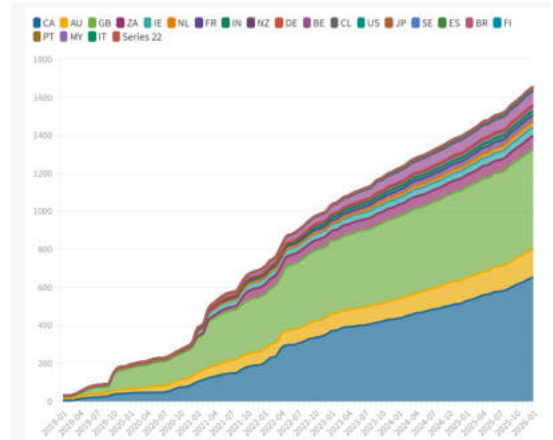
Derek Manson, from the Antonine Probus Club, shared this beautiful image of a Kingfisher playing with his food in Callander, Scotland. Share your photographs on our Photo Club page.

PROBUS Global Growth

Membership in PROBUS Global has passed 1600 members from 800 clubs in 22 countries.

Up until 2 years ago we had more members from the UK than any other country, but the Canadians have now become dominant with 39%. The UK is now at 32% and Australia is far behind with only 9%. Perhaps now that we have an Australian as President, we can attract some new members down under.

The membership statistics are updated from time to time on the Statistics web page, reachable from a link on the FAQ page: <https://probusglobal.org/Statistics/>



Did You Know?

Collingwood, Ontario, Canada has 10 PROBUS clubs with a total of 2,236 members.

According to StatsCan, the population of Collingwood is 24,811, of which 7,435 are 65 or older (2021).

We need to learn from these members how to grow and manage a club.

Music to our ears

[Graeme Stokes](#), one of our members is looking for fellow musicians to chat with about improvisational music. Even if you are not a musician, you can enjoy a sample of his music by clicking on this link: [Improvisation - Graeme Stokes](#)

Perhaps we should arrange a concert in the [Video Chat room](#). Would you attend? Let us know in the comments.

MUSIC WITHOUT THE DOTS



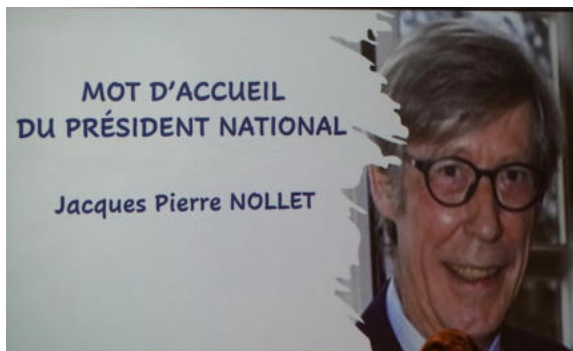
I have memories of playing with the black keys near the middle of a piano keyboard when I was about five years old. 'Playing with' eventually became playing a tune - 'Oh! Can You Wash a Sailor's Shirt . . .' taught by Auntie Margaret!

Now, I'm a nonagenarian and can do quite a lot better. I achieved a 'Higher' grade in music at school and later served many years as a church organist. However, I still prefer to play by ear and improvise short piano pieces. A sample is appended hereto as an MP3 recording - made entirely 'off the cuff' on my digital piano - not transcribed to sheet music - absolutely no editing - MUSIC WITHOUT THE DOTS.

It does seem that retired musicians with preferences like mine are few and far between. Is there one out there willing to chat?

Happy international get together at the General Assembly of Probus France

It has become a 'tradition' to increase international exchanges between Probus France, Probus Belgium and Probus Netherlands. The annual General Assembly of Probus France, held near Lille, Northern France, was the ideal opportunity for Jacques Pierre Nollet, President of Probus France, to invite Probus Belgium and Probus Netherlands. It was organised on Thursday December 11th in Marcq-en-Baroeul, close to the border with Belgium.



President of Probus France welcoming the participants to the General Assembly 2025



Guests from The Netherlands (NL) and Belgium (B)

Gauthier De Brabandere (B), Brigitte Kuijpers Van den Assem (NL), Philippe Delbar (B)

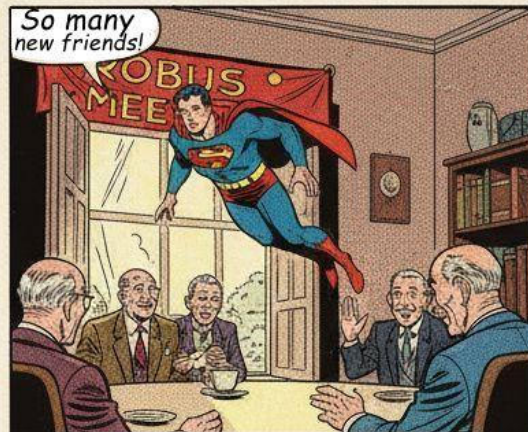
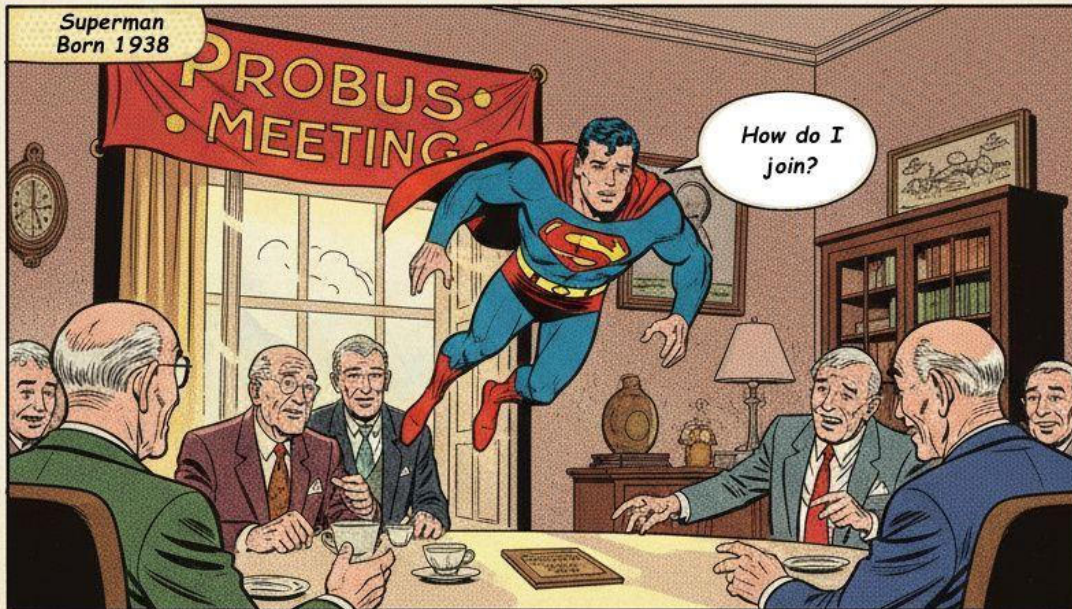
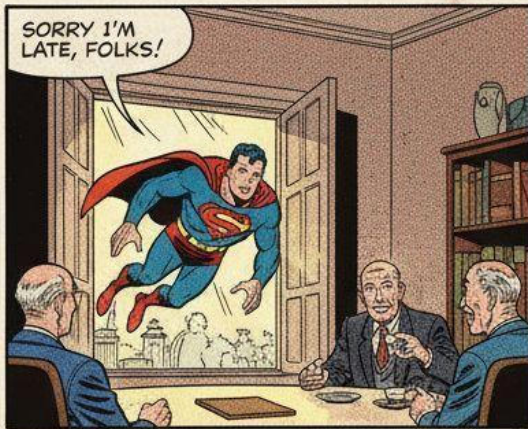
During the meeting Christophe Leruste (international relations for Probus France) presented the exchanges that took place in 2025 with Probus Belgian clubs, and presented Probus Global. Mrs. Brigitte Kuijpers Van den Assem did not mind travelling the odd 100 km to represent Probus Netherlands, joining Philippe Delbar and Gauthier De Brabandere from Probus Belgium.

The venue facilitated the contacts and exchanges between clubs from the North and the South, the East and the West of France, and is an ideal platform to try and bring together Probus clubs and members from the different countries. It makes us aware of the similarities as well as the differences which exist in the habits and rules of the different Probus organisations. We all realise the importance of getting to know each other in order to develop contacts and seek to arrange mutual exchanges.

The well-structured formal assembly was followed by ample time to meet during the drink which preceded a generous and very convivial meal. During the afternoon there was the possibility to follow an interesting presentation of common interest.

It has been rewarding to witness the enthusiasm generated by exchange visits from the Belgian club Izegem-Mandel to Reims in 2024, followed by a return visit to Belgium by Probus Epernay Champagne in 2025. The same club Izegem-Mandel organised to meet members of the Dutch clubs in Groningen during their annual trip in 2025. Hopefully more clubs can create friendships and organise exchanges based on these exciting examples.

- Gauthier De Brabandere



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