

# STOKESLEY PROBUS CLUB

## Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2024

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Held in Stokesley Town Hall on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024

The Chairman was pleased to introduce Christine Corbett of the Dorman Museum to present her talk, "William Gilleard Brown – Port Clarence's Most Famous Son".

Within the Dorman Museum archives are documents recording the life of a little remembered local man, William Gillard Brown. They comprise several boxes of diaries, part memoir, part scrap book, all beautifully written, detailing the story of his life. Railwayman, inventor, craftsman, toymaker, philanthropist, councillor, social campaigner – truly, a remarkable and very active life.

One of nine children, William was born in 1874 at Acaster Malbis (on the River Ouse, eight miles south of York). His father's interests included tinkering and inventing devices, and was responsible for several bicycle innovations, an interest which rubbed off onto William. His father died when William was fourteen, and the children were then brought up in separate homes, William living with various aunties and uncles. He was a smart child, and worked hard at school, and later with the North Eastern Railway at Selby earning enough to be able to bring his family back together and support them. After his mother re-married William and one of his brothers did not get on with their stepfather so left to stay in lodgings.

In 1894 William married Mary Elizabeth, the love of his life, and a true soul mate. He accepted a transfer to Port Clarence in 1907 and they moved to 7, Railway Cottages where they raised their five children.

At Port Clarence William threw himself into Church life being Church Warden and a member of the choir at St John's Church at Haverton Hill. Being a railwayman, a reserved occupation, he was exempted from WW1 military service. Notably, 82 men from Port Clarence and Haverton Hill area lost their lives during war service.

Woodworking was a passion for William, and after the war he carved an intricate lectern for the Church incorporating the names of all 82 men. Such was his dedication that he made it in 470 hours over a period of four years. The Church has long since been demolished, and the whereabouts of the lectern is unknown. Hopefully, it survives and will be found and given the recognition it deserves.

One of the many objects he carved was a walking stick for the then Prime Minister, the RH David Lloyd George. A thank you letter dated 1920 from the PM is included in the collection of paperwork held by the museum.

William took to civic duties and became a Councillor for the Rural District of Stockton, and did much work in support of hospitals. He joined the Board of Guardians administered under the Poor Law Act to oversee the management of Workhouses. One of his greatest achievements was campaigning relentlessly for the abolition of Workhouses, and the establishment of a more compassionate alternative, especially for the elderly. Eventually, the Labour Party took this up, abolished Workhouses, and introduced social housing.

Among the many events William recorded in detail was the opening of the Transporter Bridge in 1911. Also, his participation as a VIP in the Darlington and Stockton Railway Centenary celebrations in 1925.

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William's wife, Mary, was equally involved in local activities and participated in the Women's Institute, the Co-op Women's Guild, the Mother's Union, and child welfare organisations.

They celebrated their Silver Wedding in 1919, but Mary died in 1930 at the age of 54. Grieved with grief, William commissioned a very ornate gravestone in Haverton Hill churchyard. Despite a breakdown in his health due to his loss, William surprisingly married again one year later – to the local post mistress. They moved to Ormesby, then later to Ripon Road in Redcar in 1939.

During his retirement years he was always very active spending much time crafting and tinkering in his workshop, especially making toys for deprived children. William died in 1965 at the age of 90 in Redcar, but was buried in his spiritual home, Haverton Hill.

Following several questions and thanks from the Chairman for an entertaining and very thoroughly researched presentation, Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to Christine in the customary manner with a hearty round of applause.

JE 16.4.24

### **2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

#### **Eulogy – Wilf Elliott**

1. Attendance: 25 Members attended with 9 apologies
2. Guests: No guests in attendance
3. Minutes of previous AGM held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023  
Minutes accepted
4. Matters arising: None
5. Chairman's AGM Report: Keith Waller

Detailed Report uploaded to website.

Highlighted points in Meeting:

Thanks to Committee Members

Membership: currently 47 Members.

Over the previous year there were 10 new Members, and sadly, 5 Members either passed away or resigned due to ill health.

Monthly Meetings – high average attendance of 31 (up from 20 for previous year)

Speaker Programme listed and praised.

Member Lunches reported with a successful transition from 2 to 4 per year.

Trips reported with success

Christmas Lunch enjoyed

Website praised

A positive 'looking forward' outlook

And thanks to the membership

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Programme Cards were distributed

### 6. Treasurer and Membership Secretary's AGM Report: Chris Lee

The Treasurer led a vote of thanks for the Chairman to acknowledge his hard work and fine stewardship, which keeps the Club running so smoothly.

The 2023/2024 Annual Accounts had been issued to Members. Finances were bolstered by an increase in subscription revenue due to new Members, but this was partly offset as most costs over the year have risen but, with several savings, the final result shows a small surplus.

An excellent job by the Speaker Finder in finding three speakers who did not charge resulted in a record saving to budget.

An anonymous donation had been received to offset cost of next month's speaker.

As the finances are in reasonable shape, it is proposed to hold the subscription charge at the current rate of £33 for 2024/2025.

The annual turnover was almost £2,000.

The Auditor, Maj Chuhan, confirmed that he had audited the accounts and found them to be in order.

No queries regarding the accounts were raised by Members.

The accounts were accepted by Members as a true record.

The subscription rate of £33 for 2024/2025 was accepted by Members.

Subscription payments can be given to Chris Lee by cash or by cheque or can be paid direct by Bank Transfer.

### 7. Speaker Finder's AGM Report:

The 2023/2024 programme was a good mix of subjects appreciated and enjoyed by

Members.

The 2024/2025 programme is complete and work has now started to find speakers for 2025/2026. As always, any suggestions are most welcome.

### 8. Website Manager's AGM Report:

The website is constantly kept up to date. Members were invited to visit the site and provide feedback.

### 9. Secretary's AGM Report:

All matters relating to Minutes, Meetings and the Constitution were addressed and reported. It is hoped that Members unable to attend Meetings would still benefit from talks by reading summaries.

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### 10. Constitution

The current and proposed Constitutions were both shown on the website. Members agreed to adopt the proposed changes.

### 11. Committee Elections

Keith Bell stood again as a General Member – Approved.

Chris Lee stood again as Treasurer and Membership Secretary – Approved.

Keith Burton is stepping down as a General Member. Keith was thanked for his years of service and for his past work as a very effective Speaker Finder. Gift: Book of Quotations.

No comments from Members regarding Committee matters.

### 12. Trips

Land of Iron on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2024. Travel will be on a car sharing basis with drivers having their museum entry charge and cost of lunch (= £27) covered by all other attendees who will each pay £35. This is based on estimated number of 16 attending - final cost will be calculated when number is confirmed. Those wishing to attend please confirm and pay by 26<sup>th</sup> June.

### 13. AOB

Cards advising against cold calling prepared by Stefan Barnes were available to Members. Thanks was expressed by all to Stefan for his continued input despite battling health problems and much other work in the background.

Fun draw: Prizes – two books of Quotations.

The lucky winners were Chris Griffiths and Mike McCamley

Next AGM is Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Next Members' meeting is Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024

16th April 2024 JE