

Probus Club of Galashiels and District



Contributed by Ian Forsyth

As the longest serving member in the Club, having started in 1994, I thought Members may be interested in my personal recollections of its history.

I retired to the Borders in 1993 having served over 31 years with the Police in the City of Glasgow/Strathclyde Force and set up home in Whytbank Row in Clovenfords. My wife and I joined the Old Parish and St Paul's Church in Galashiels where I became an Elder. One of the other Elders, Arthur Little, was one of the founding members of the Galashiels & District Probus Club and he invited me join it. I'd never heard of Probus before but once he explained what it was I was happy to join.

Arthur had been one of the members of Rotary who had decided to start up a Probus Club for Galashiels and District in 1976. He was a solicitor by profession and he drew up the Club's first constitution. He later became President for 1991/92.

When I joined the Club, the meetings were being held in an upstairs room of the Kings Hotel in Galashiels. I was invited to become a Committee Member soon after joining. In these days, the two junior members of the Committee served the tea and coffee supplied by the hotel, to the membership!

After a year as Vice President, I became President in 1999. I remained on the Committee for a year after that dealing with the reports on the meetings to the Border Telegraph and The Southern Reporter.

I introduced Jim Stewart to the Club and he subsequently became Secretary and Syllabus Secretary. Jim also lived in Clovenfords, latterly in Whytbank Row. Jim gave us a talk on his career with British Airways and, as President, I accompanied him when he gave the same talk to neighbouring Clubs in Lauder, Innerleithen and Hawick. I became aware that the Presidents of those Clubs wore a "Chain of Office" but we had none. Our Committee agreed to a proposal that we should have one. All

the research and arrangements took quite a while but it was eventually presented on the 25th anniversary of the Club in 2001 to President Mike Brydon by Arthur Little, as shown on the accompanying photograph.

After a while in the Kings Hotel, members were having difficulty climbing the stairs to the meeting room. As a result, the Club moved to a ground-floor meeting room in the Abbotsford Hotel in Galashiels. This was recently demolished and replaced by a Starbucks Coffee Drive-Through.

The Club next moved to the George & Abbotsford Hotel in Melrose for a few years, then a further move to the Kingsknowes Hotel in Galashiels. This was good venue with a ground-floor meeting room and plenty of parking space but, once the Crematorium was built nearby, it became busy with funeral parties. We then moved to our current home of the Waverley Castle Hotel.

At one time we used to have a Burns' Lunch in January although it was more of a Burns' Supper with the haggis piped in by member Donald Swanson, the address to the haggis, the Immortal Memory, a few Scottish tunes on the fiddle by member Robert Fraser and a bit of community singing using the Club's song books.

[Note: Whytbank Row in Clovenfords is mentioned twice in Ian's text but it has also been residence to Dave Romanis, who was President in 2017/18, and to our present Secretary]

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Mike seals his place in the Probus Club chain gang



CHAINED UP. Arthur Little presenting chain of office of Galashiels Probus Club to president Mike Brydon surrounded by past presidents — Jim Peter, Jimmy Barker, George Brown, David Stewart, Willy Cowan, Duncan Brown, Tom Lindsay, Colin McKenzie, Ian Forsyth and Ian MacKinnon. Also in the group is member Ronnie Mitchell, a past president of Northallerton Probus Club.