



Celebrating 50 years of Probus in New Zealand





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INTRODUCTION

The large network of Probus clubs in New Zealand and Australia is a vibrant testament to the concept that retirement from work ushers in years of active engagement with each other, with our communities and with the wider world. The Probus motto 'Friendship, Fellowship and Fun' allows a great deal of variety in the ways in which individual clubs choose to express the Probus philosophy and navigate the Probus journey.

Since the Kapiti Coast Probus Club was inaugurated in 1974 as the first Probus club in the South Pacific, the movement has spread from Whangarei in the north of New Zealand's North Island, to Invercargill in the deep south of its South Island to Norfolk Island and all over Australia.

Commencing with an account of the origins of Probus and the first club in the South Pacific region, Kapiti Coast, this Golden Jubilee history is arranged to reflect the diversity which flourishes under the Probus umbrella.

- Establishing clubs and club structure
- Membership
- Interest groups
- Activities
- Guest speakers
- Outings and trips
- Celebrating the Golden Jubilee

This account has drawn heavily on *The Probus story*, Paul Henningham's history of the Probus movement published in 2006, which outlines the origin of Probus and its development in the South Pacific. Submissions generously contributed by dozens of New Zealand clubs have been mined to demonstrate the wide range of ideas and experiences populating the Probus universe.



IN THE BEGINNING

Coincidence and timing played important parts in the formation of Probus clubs in New Zealand and Australia. The movement began in Britain. In 1965, Harold Blanchard, a member of the Rotary Club of Caterham in Surrey, noticed that retired people who were not members of Rotary had little opportunity to meet new people or gain new experiences. Rotarians listed the names of retired business and professional people who might be interested in forming a new organisation.

Harold Blanchard's Rotary Club agreed that he should form a committee which could form a club for retirees. On 22 February 1966, a meeting of 42 people unanimously agreed to form a club and chose the name Probus, an amalgam of 'professional' and 'business' and, coincidentally, the Latin for probity or virtue. The first Probus club met formally on 2 March 1966. Completely unknown to Harold Blanchard and the Caterham Rotary Club, Fred Carnhill of the Rotary Club of Welwyn Garden City had begun meeting retired men for coffee. Fred's Rotary Club agreed that a new club, without the Rotary obligations of service and regular attendance, could offer companionship and intellectual stimulation to retired people. This new club was named the Campus Club for the area where it was formed.

The Council of Rotary International in Great Britain had noted that recent surveys had found that social isolation was common among retired people. Rotary's primary obligation was to the disadvantaged and needy, but isolation affected a much wider group. Council members were considering this issue when they heard about the Probus Club at Caterham and the Campus Club, which eventually changed its name to Probus. Rotary clubs were encouraged to consider forming similar clubs. Coincidence again played a part when the Probus movement spread to New Zealand and Australia.



PROBUS COMES TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC

In 1973, Gordon Roatz, a Rotarian and businessman from Paraparaumu, visited a cousin in Helensburgh, Scotland. His cousin was a member of a Probus club which had been sponsored by the Rotary Club of Dumbarton. Gordon brought informative literature back to his own Rotary Club and secured the club's agreement to take steps to form a Probus club which was likely to appeal to the growing number of retired people in the Kapiti region.

Rotary sponsorship and support were keys to the further development of Probus in the South Pacific. An advertisement in the Kapiti Observer brought 12 people to an initial meeting on 4 November 1974. Gordon had a simple slogan for Probus: 'keep it simple, keep it interesting, keep it cheap'. Membership grew steadily.

Not long afterwards, Jim King from the Rotary Club of Dumbarton, visited the Rotary Club of Parramatta North (now Parramatta City) and told members of the success of the Probus movement in the United Kingdom. At Jim King's urging, the Dumbarton club sent information to the club in Parramatta. The Rotary District which included Parramatta took up the idea and established a Probus sub-committee. In November 1975, the Rotary Club of Hunter's Hill in Sydney convened a meeting which resolved to sponsor a Probus club.

The Probus Club of Hunter's Hill met for the first time on 3 February 1976. This first Australian Probus club and the first club in New Zealand did not know of each other's existence. It is a curious coincidence that the Rotary Club of Dumbarton played a part in the establishment of both.



THE KAPITI COAST PROBUS CLUB

Developing from that first meeting on 4 November 1974, the structure of the Kapiti Coast Club followed a model familiar to members through their membership of other organisations. An elected committee, headed by the expected executive committee – President, Secretary, Treasury – manages the club; other members elected to the committee often take on particular responsibilities such as outings, trips and guest speakers.

Like many Probus clubs, Kapiti Coast met in a succession of venues to accommodate growing numbers. There was soon a sufficient number of people to allow Kapiti Coast to sponsor a new club at Waikanae and, later, additional clubs in the region. The Kapiti Coast Club was originally a men's club. The first ladies club in the area opened at Waikanae in 1991. Kapiti Coast became a 'combined' club with membership of both men and women in 2004.

Eileen Fluery was familiar with Probus through the membership of her husband, Colin. In 2004, she was one of the first women to be a member of the Kapiti Coast Combined Club. In common with many Probus members, Eileen coordinated morning teas and helped with other necessary chores which keep successful clubs running smoothly and became a member of the Committee and, in 2009, the first woman President of Kapiti Coast. In her year as President, the Club celebrated its 35th Anniversary. Eileen made the cake for that event. She was also present at the 45th anniversary as a Past President and cut the cake at that event. Eileen is a life member of the Club.

Eileen was a Kindergarten teacher and a member of the Salvation Army. She was used to working with groups of people, and dealing with colleagues, staff and parents. The knowledge, skills and ethics she developed during her life helped her in her year as President and throughout her time in Probus.





Eileen Fleury, a remarkable Probian

She said “I have been helping people all my life and that continued when I joined Probus’. She reflected, ‘We were a happy lot. It’s still people looking after people, making lots of friends. They are friends you keep’.

Perhaps Eileen’s words are an appropriate summary of Probus’s philosophy. Over the years, the Kapiti Coast Club has been addressed by guest speakers and by its own members speaking on topics of their choice.

There are trips and activities and vigorous interest groups within the club. On 4 November 2024, the Kapiti Coast Probus Club celebrated its Golden Jubilee – and the Golden Jubilee of the Probus movement in the South Pacific – with a gala luncheon. The Kapiti Coast story illustrates the important Probus themes which give this history its structure.

1. GETTING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

Aims and goals are always important in developing viable organisations. The story of New Zealand Probus clubs reflects a complex goal, simply stated by the Hastings Windsor Club: ‘To stimulate thought, interest and participation in activities at a time of life when horizons are narrowing and opportunities to make new friends are limited’.

The Probus idea was embraced so enthusiastically that, by 1981, there were 44 clubs in Australia and New Zealand. As sponsors of new clubs, Rotarians became aware that the Probus movement could be, as Paul Henningham expressed it, ‘haphazard and spasmodic’ or ‘planned and systematic’.



A Probus Information Committee within Rotary soon became the Probus Information Centre, ready to guide Rotary clubs wishing to form Probus clubs using a manual 'How to form a Probus Club'.

New clubs were accredited and provided with information to guide their development. An early guideline, 'How to run a Probus Club', became the Probus Club Handbook. The Probus Centre – South Pacific (PCSP) adopted its own constitution and outlined its responsibilities which included promoting Probus, accrediting clubs, maintaining a register of clubs and publishing a Probus magazine or newsletter. In 1985, the Probus Centre used its own small office in Rotary premises in Parramatta.

By 2006, PCSP had accredited more than 2,200 Probus clubs and had a staff of three people. In August 2011, all the operations of PCSP were assumed by a newly formed company based in New South Wales, called: Probus South Pacific Limited (PSPL). In February 2013, demonstrating their confidence in the new organisation, Rotary transferred the Probus trademarks to PSPL. The assignment of the trademarks to PSPL put control of the Probus brand 'where it belonged', with Probus!

In 2014, a small breakaway group established Probus New Zealand Inc., and recruited around half the New Zealand Probus clubs and membership. Unfortunately, much of the disharmony at that time was based on misinformation about the structure and costs of being affiliated with PSPL. Subsequently, PSPL successfully exerted its rights to its trademarked name and Probus New Zealand Inc. became Friendship New Zealand Inc. (FNZI) in 2016.

Sadly, the breakaway caused damage to the Probus brand. That said, the organisation of Probus within New Zealand has subsequently been strengthened and there continues to be a thriving Probus community with thousands of members across New Zealand, proudly enjoying Probus membership benefits. This includes the Kapiti Probus Club, the very first Probus Club in the Southern Hemisphere, which marked their Golden Anniversary in 2024.



Club structure

Probus clubs in New Zealand and Australia operate in three structures: men's clubs, ladies clubs and combined clubs. The first ladies Probus clubs were formed in 1982 at St Heliers in New Zealand and Bateau Bay in New South Wales. The ladies clubs initially used different colours and logos from the men's clubs but, by 1988, the familiar blue and yellow colours and the Probus logo, registered as trademarks in 1983, were used by all clubs.

The Ellerslie Ladies Club, established in 1994, attracted members with a wide range of experience. The role of Treasurer in all clubs is demanding. The long-standing Ellerslie Club Treasurer has become familiar with financial reporting, dealing with Auckland City Council and the intricacies of grant applications. She has, of course, made friends with the many Probus Committee members and volunteers who have offered their skills and talents to keep the Club alive and lively. Ladies clubs do continue to flourish, but the emphasis has shifted to combined clubs.

The Christchurch Kit Cat Club, established in 1997, was one of the first New Zealand clubs to combine men and women in the same club. The Dunedin North Club, formed in 1993, admitted its first woman member, Frances Ross, in 2023 and elected its first woman President in 2024.

Allowing women to join helped the Alexandra Club in Central Otago to attract married couples and younger members. The Stoke Club began as a men's club in 1993. Unfortunately, with dwindling numbers, this club went into recess to re-group. The decision was made to become a combined club. Stoke Central Combined Probus was established in October 2004. There were once separate men's and women's clubs in Levin but, in 1995, the club was chartered as a combined club. In 2008, when the Wellington Eastern Suburbs Club was 21 years old, it opened membership to women, giving priority to the wives of existing members.

Club names

Probus Club names tend to be related to a club's geographical location, but there are variations. The Probus Club of Maungaraki Wairarapa established in 1992, chose the name Maungaraki because it represents the Eastern Hills area of Wairarapa where many of the founding members resided.



The original name of the Wellington Eastern Suburbs Club, established in 1987, was Mt Victoria Probus Club. At that time, Probus clubs required a Rotary Club sponsor and this club was sponsored by Mt Victoria Rotary Club. In 2004, the club's name was changed to better reflect its geographical location.

The Wellington Combined Club, formed in 2003, found that name to be very similar to a local taxi company, and did not reflect the Club's location in the southern and eastern suburbs of Wellington. In such circumstances name changes can be wise.

The unusual name of the Kit Cat Club of Christchurch was drawn from Christopher Cat's London tavern in 1702 when a Kit Cat Club met to debate the political problems of the day. The Christchurch Kit Cat Club did not aspire to the political ambitions of its forebears, but it encouraged its members to take part in discussion and debate.

Committees

Voluntary work of various kinds often becomes an important commitment for people in later life. Membership of a Probus club committee is always time-consuming, often stressful, but always rewarding.

In discussion with other Probus clubs, the Rutherford Club in Nelson discovered an oft-repeated pattern. A club might start out with a hiss and a roar, as enthusiastic members willingly raise their hands and happily accept the greatness thrust upon them. Ten years later, it's a different story. Those eager beavers are now in their mid-seventies, and less keen to accept office when asked to stand.

Committees can spawn new committees. The Hastings-Windsor Club formed a special committee to arrange celebrations of its twentieth anniversary and another for the silver jubilee celebrations. These committee positions helped their members to get to know fellow members of the club much more quickly. The Kapiti Central Combined Club recognises the contribution of its early committee members in laying the foundation for a vibrant club.



Meeting venues

Many clubs have had to change venues – in some cases many times – when numbers outgrew a meeting place. The Kapiti Central Combined Club has been fortunate in having a stable venue and a great relationship with the Community Church where the club has continued to meet since its inauguration in 2010.

Attracting and keeping members

Retired people do not have a 'right' to Probus membership. Each prospective member has to be nominated, seconded, found suitable and then invited to membership of a particular club.

The Christchurch Kit Cat Club has had the benefit of a range of knowledge and experience through a wide variety of careers among its membership. Christchurch is a university city with the club situated in a nearby suburb. Several Kit Cat members have university connections. Other members are drawn from a range of occupations and professions including the military, farming, manufacturing, medicine, education, public service and private businesses.

Geography can be a difficult factor inhibiting membership development. The Hanmer Springs Club covers the Hurunui and Amuri districts of North Canterbury, a very large geographical area with a small population. Since its inception the club has attracted a membership between 40 and 50.

The Wellington Combined Club, in a city where population is not a challenge, has noted that quite a number of those who joined in the early days are still members, but as with many types of clubs – Probus included – retaining and recruiting new members can be a challenge. In big cities, Probus has to compete for members with many other organisations.

The Waiuku Club is located in a small farming community 20 kilometres from Pukekohe and the Glenbrook steel mill in South Auckland. There has always been a very strong community spirit in the area and Waiuku Probus Club always encourages semi-retired and retired people to join and participate in the club's numerous activities.



In the 23 years since the Probus Club of Hauraki Plains was established, there have been many changes in membership, activities and goals. Ngatea is a small rural township in the Waikato region, and this is reflected in the membership of people who, in the past, have mainly come from farming backgrounds. In recent years with more people leaving the city for a quieter and more affordable retirement, members' previous occupations have changed. There is now a much more varied cross-section of people from all walks of life contributing to the colourful warp and weft of the membership fabric. Retired small business owners, retail workers, teachers, office workers and nurses are now to be found making up more and more of the membership.

The Makino Combined Club has been more than successful in attracting members. For many years, the club had a long waiting list of aspirants wishing to join – at one stage it stretched to 60! The size of the club membership was dictated by the size of the venue. In recent years, a larger venue has been secured, and membership now stands at 240.

The Rutherford Club based in Nelson has considered the ups and downs which many clubs share. As members age, those lovely and varied activities of days gone by can dwindle to monthly meetings, sporadic outings, and the occasional lunch. Why has the Rutherford Probus Club not emulated this pattern? That club puts it down to two very pertinent facts, for which they must thank early committees. When nominating new would-be members, the club has always advised that new members should be younger than existing members and know from the start that they will be expected to contribute. Secondly, the club seeks nominees with varied professions and interests, who will be prepared to share their expertise with others. From these two simple recommendations the club is buzzing with fascinating, exciting members – and sufficient and varied activities that anyone who seeks new experiences will never be disappointed.

Promotion of the Probus idea has been very significant in club development. At left, the Blenheim Club created a memorable advertisement. At right, the Hauraki Plains Club took a different approach.





The growth of the Probus movement in the South Pacific has been spectacular. By June 1985, only 11 years after the first club was formed, there were 435 Probus clubs, including 41 ladies clubs, and a membership of about 20,000. On 22 August 1989, the Peregrine Beach Club on Queensland's Sunshine Coast became the 1000th Probus club.

Club cohesion

Keeping a club both cohesive and dynamic can be challenging. New Zealand clubs have developed a number of strategies to keep club life interesting and stimulating. From its first meeting, the Blenheim Club has followed advice that it should be 'friendly, stimulating and simple'. The Christchurch South West Club publishes an annual membership address booklet to help members to connect with each other.

The Dunedin North Club has its own special award called the 'Bob Todd Trophy' which is presented annually. Robert Hamilton Todd, known as Bob, was President in 2003-2004. He died suddenly in August 2004. His wife, Daphne Iris Todd, a member of the Dunedin Ladies Probus Club had died a month earlier. The Todd family supplied a memorial trophy to each club, in memory of Bob and Daphne, requesting that they be presented annually to a member who has made an outstanding contribution throughout the year. The award is made each March in recognition of service in the previous year.



Additional attractions can stimulate attendance at meetings. The Hauraki Plains Club added a book and jigsaw exchange table for members to browse on meeting days. This has been very popular. The Club also introduced a 'show and tell' table with a different theme each month. Members could bring an item with a small written description. This could be something they had made, a souvenir from a holiday, or a family heirloom to name just three examples. 'Show and tell' has proved to be very successful as a means of getting to know new people. It is a great ice breaker.

The Maungaraki Wairarapa Club enjoys trivia quizzes. Members form teams and work together to find the answers. The quizzes have been much enjoyed and are likely to continue.

At the Mangere Bridge Club, traditions which began many years ago have endured. 'The Pink Pig' is displayed to receive donations for transgression in a manner similar to the Sergeant at Arms in the Rotary movement to which Probus owes its genesis. All money is donated to a hospice. The gardeners amongst the club donate plants which are readily purchased at meetings and, of course, raffles sell out quickly.

The Hutt Combined Club has recognised that its history can enhance interest in the club. More than 1,100 photos, all entered into albums with events and members named, give easy access to the history of the Club. The Christchurch Kit Cat Club has created three large 'scrapbooks' containing its history through monthly 'Chit Chat' newsletters and photographs – a real treasure.

The Russley Club celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2023 with a sumptuous lunch at the Christchurch Golf Club, and the launch of its publication *A History of the Russley Probus Club*. This book records 25 Presidents, and all Committee members, and a roll-call of all 346 previous and current members. Fascinating reports on all 32 multi-day tours are included, as well as poems and songs from these tours, along with notes on the many day trips enjoyed by members.



The Probus Club of Karori Inc was formed in 1991 and therefore celebrated their 30 year anniversary in December 2021. To mark the occasion, a small booklet of some 40-plus pages was produced using material that had been stored in various members' garages. Some of it was pretty tattered and many of the paper clips and staples had rusted with age. But what a joy it was to read all the historical details and the black-and-white printed copies of the monthly newsletter.

From 2013 to 2019, the Newsletters were stored on a USB stick and subsequently on the Editor's computers. There is no doubt that members who celebrate the Club's 40th birthday in 2031 will have fun putting together detailed memories from this source.

The Christchurch South West Club plans to develop a video showing some of the club's history and milestones to screen before meetings for members and visitors to see what the club has to offer. For example, the evening TVNZ News featured 'Probians sky diving off the Auckland Sky Tower'. Within ten minutes this inspired a man in the Christchurch area to enquire about Probus and found that the next monthly meeting was the next day. He came to the meeting and became a member.

The Christchurch earthquakes of 2010/2011 affected the Kaiapoi region badly and had a significant impact on the Kaiapoi Combined Probus Club membership.

These difficulties were overcome however and membership at the time of the 50th anniversary stood at around 105, with two founding members still attending monthly meetings.



Finance

Probus clubs are non-political, non-sectarian and are not money-raising organisations, but expenses have to be met. Over many years applications have been made to Lotteries New Zealand for funds to allow members of the Alexandra Club to be subsidised on all club activities. This support means that members only pay \$20 to attending local activities or \$30 to join a day trip by bus and a meal at a hotel or restaurant. The Aotearoa Gaming Trust has provided funds to enable Alexandra Club members to travel out of the Central Otago area to more remote and interesting places. Funds from 'Up Charity' provided the club with funds to purchase an overhead screen and data projector. The local New World supermarket provided funds of \$3,000 for a public address system to enable those who are hearing impaired to hear speakers more easily.

In 1999, the Ellerslie Club benefited from the Auckland City Council policy that, if members are over 60 years of age or receive superannuation, the club had free use of a community hall for up to 10 hours each month. So, no rent was charged. This changed in 2004 when rent payments commenced.

Fostering new clubs

The Christchurch Kit Cat Club had a long waiting list and, therefore, established the Russley Club. By 2011 membership of the Mana Combined Club had increased to 120, the maximum number fire regulations permitted at their meeting venue. There was also a waiting list of over 30. Subsequently, Plimmerton Rotary was approached and a new club, Whitby Probus, was formed.



The Woburn Club was formed in 1999 when the Eastern Hutt Rotary Club sponsored a meeting of interested people at the Hutt Golf Club. So many people attended that the decision was made to form two clubs. People at the meeting were divided into two groups by splitting the room down the middle with individuals being given the option of crossing the line to stay with their friends. The two clubs were called Woburn and Boulcott.

In November 2019 the Milford Club was instrumental in the formation of the Hobsonville Probus Club. Spear-headed by Past President Wayne McDonald, assisted by several Milford Club members, an Interest meeting was organised in November at which registrations were taken. A month later, a foundation meeting was held attended by Margaret Drake, NZ representative on the PSPL Board, and Clive Menkin, President of the Milford Rotary Club which was very supportive during the establishment of the Hobsonville Club. It was very satisfying to see this thriving new club grow to a membership of over 100.

In 1988, the late Harry Tolley of Masterton Rotary approached Chris Horrocks, the Past President of Masterton South Rotary Club, to explore a joint project to set up a Probus club. A team sent out invitations to 45 people who could be interested. To their surprise almost 90 arrived at the Masterton Club, to the horror of the manager who thought the Fire Brigade would arrive to close down the meeting as the room was filled to overflowing with people even sitting on the windowsills.

Masterton Probus Club was formed on 26 April 1989 with 200 members and a waiting list. It wasn't long before Chris Horrocks and Harry Tolley saw the need for another club and so the Ruamahanga Probus Club was formed in April 1990, followed by Greytown in July 1990, Maungaraki in May 1992, Waiohine in December 1992, Pahiatua in December 1993, Tauherenikau in June 1994 and Takahe, which became Chris Horrocks's club, in November 1994. Eight Wairarapa Probus Clubs in five years, a remarkable achievement.

The Waitakere Ladies Probus Club was formed in 1993 but there was such great interest and demand by women in the area, that in November 1995, the Waitakere Rotary Community Chairman, John Lister, called an 'interest meeting' to form another Probus Club: The Probus Ladies Club of Te Atatu. The Waterloo Club was formed in 2003 when the four other Probus clubs in the Hutt all had long waiting lists.



Overcoming difficulties

Every human organisation has its difficult times. A suggestion that New Zealand clubs should leave the Probus South Pacific organisation caused discussion and debate in many clubs. Members of the Glenfield Club discussed the issues. The members and the Committee came to a unanimous decision to remain part of the worldwide fellowship of Probus. The club has never regretted the decision and its membership has grown. Naturally, clubs which chose to depart from Probus South Pacific were not entitled to use the Probus name or logo. Probus South Pacific realised that there was a need for improved communication and understanding of its role. Fairness is, of course, essential. In 2000, a capitation fee to support the central Probus office replaced the old voluntary fee of 50 cents for each member.

During the 2022-2023 year, the Mosgiel Ladies Club addressed the suggestion from a small number of members that the club should break away from PSPL and form a completely separate club without the need for a 'mother ship'. After several months debating the issue, it was decided that the motion to stay with or to leave PSPL should be decided by secret ballot at the annual general meeting, presided over by two Justices of the Peace. It was gratifying to find that the great majority of members voted to continue as before. About ten ladies left the club but, since March 2023, numbers have recovered.

Joining with other clubs

Getting together within a club is enjoyable, but there are many benefits when clubs get together. In June 1983, the first issue of Probian News featured a trip to New Zealand enjoyed by a group of Australian clubs. Judy Blanchard, widow of Colin Blanchard who founded the first club in Caterham, Surrey, was a very welcome visitor in 1987. Probians enjoy welcoming visitors from other clubs wherever they are located.

In 1987, the Probus Association of Western Australia invited clubs from the entire region to a Septemberfest to exchange information and ideas as well as enjoy wine and wildflowers. Brisbane was the focus of an international



gathering which was timed to coincide with Expo 88. The first get-together to use the term 'Rendezvous' brought Probians to South Australia in 1991. In 1995, visitors from North America came to a Rendezvous in Christchurch. Probus 'Rendezvous' enable clubs to hear ideas from other clubs. The idea became so popular that a special committee was established to ensure that claims for the privilege of hosting a Rendezvous did not conflict. In 2008 the Christchurch Rendezvous was reported to be one of the most successful with Probians attending from Australia, Japan, the Philippines and the United Kingdom. Hornby Club was part of the committee of 12 drawn from clubs in the region to arrange the program. The Rendezvous began with a Cathedral Service and a visit to the Christchurch Town Hall, finishing at the world famous Air Force Museum.

The Central Palmerston North Club enjoyed the experience of leadership in a Probus Rendezvous. A smallish but highly successful event gave the club the chance to showcase the wider region to Probus cousins from Australia, as well as New Zealand Probians. The Thames Club has also enjoyed Probus Rendezvous. In 1997, the club went to a Probus Rendezvous in Perth, travelled to Monkey Mia and to Rottnest Island before enjoying wine tasting in the Barossa Valley and a bit of gold panning at Ballarat.



Visitors from other clubs, especially international clubs, are always welcome.
The Raumati Club had an enjoyable day with their Canadian visitors.



Marilyn Werry and her husband, David, were on a cruise starting in Sydney and calling in at Wellington for the day. Marilyn had been president of their club. The get-together initiated an exchange of newsletters, as in a twin city relationship. David has also been a President of their club. Several Raumati members entertained the Canadian visitors at lunch at The Backbencher, an iconic pub and eatery in Wellington. Afterwards, Marilyn and David Werry joined a group of Raumati members on a visit to Te Papa Museum and the Gallipoli Exhibition.

The Te Atatu Ladies Club has established a liaison with Waitakere and Henderson Ladies Probus Clubs with members invited to join in activities or excursions. The Eastern Hutt Ladies Club last joined forces with the Woburn Club to celebrate the festive season at the ever-popular Pines restaurant. As well as delicious food they had a spectacular view over Cook Strait. The Eastern Hutt members were very grateful to the Woburn Club for including them as the Eastern Hutt membership was too small to go alone. The Isel Ladies Club held a very popular Housie morning event annually with members from other clubs invited.

Communication

Communication between Probus South Pacific and between clubs and members is essential in ensuring that Probus flourishes. In 1983, the Probus Information Centre began to publish a quarterly magazine. Before long, *Probus News* grew in size and diversity of content.

Club newsletters became more and more important. The Russley Club's *In Touch* newsletter was launched when the club began. The first issue was dated 22 June 1998. *In Touch* has served the club and its members extremely well, keeping members informed of what is happening at Russley Probus. More than 270 editions have been circulated. This is a testament to the passion and persistence of the editors and contributors in keeping every member up to date with the club's activities.

Probus clubs need to be well in touch with the modern world. The Milford Combined Club, for instance, maintains a website which highlights the club's interest groups and guest speakers and provides information for members of upcoming events and has links to the club's newsletters and PSPL resources. Having an online presence has proved to be another avenue for membership enquiries and applications.



2. PEOPLE POWER

Interesting members

Probus is all about people. Discovering the life stories, interests and opinions available within a club is one of the joys of Probus membership. The Isel Ladies Club, for instance, found that their members have led interesting and varied lives, even if they didn't think so. There is always something that has been achieved or has survived. The only way to know what a person has done in their life is to ask! Some of the Isel examples are bird rescue, building houses in third world countries for Habitat for Humanity, silver smithing, nannying for the rich in Europe, world-wide travels, teaching English to Italian children in London, greyhound rescue, farming, community volunteering, bringing up families, joining the technological age.

The Makino Club has its share of interesting characters, one of whom was sufficiently talented to draw caricatures to support the humorous stories he told couched in nostalgic verse. Another was a worldclass left hand golfer and others have excelled in croquet and bowls. An interesting historic event involved a member who was a noted florist in the area. In 1953 the late Queen Elizabeth II was in Palmerston North on her first New Zealand visit and there was a luncheon in her honour. A club member prepared the floral arrangements for the Queen's table and also supplied the champagne glasses which were used on the Royal table.

Longstanding and aged members

Longer life expectancy is one of the great benefits of the modern world. Radio and television news bulletins, newspapers and science programs abound with research showing that social interaction, willingness to learn and embracing new experiences enhance both quality of life and life expectancy.

The Alexandra Club has 10 members in its 'Over 90' group. A special dinner celebrated these remarkable members.





Some of the Alexandra Club's 'over 90' members

Ten of the 120 foundation members of the Christchurch Kit Cat Club, established in 1997, remain active in the club. With his family, a member of the Hauraki Plains Club climbed Mt Taranaki on his 90th birthday, achieving the official record for the oldest person to climb the mountain.

Ivan Hansen, at 97 years old, is an active member of the Rolleston Club. Ivan compiles and runs a radio show. Every Sunday afternoon a pre-recorded show of classical music, entitled Opus 22, is broadcast on Plains FM. Ivan is also responsible for delivering an operatic programme, Opus 33, twice each month. Preparation for each program can take anything from 40 minutes to 3 hours depending on content and fitting the pieces of music to the allotted time. A 10 minute piece of music to fill the gap at the end of the hour needs to be just that – not 9 or 11 minutes! Ivan believes that the older person can suffer from the malady of 'not having enough to do'. He enjoys having deadlines to meet and schedules to observe. Ivan's contribution to the radio world is a shining example of staying engaged, connected and active.

At 77 years old, Phil Voyce joined the Thames Probus Club in September 1990 missing being a foundation member by a month. Phil developed Probus friendships that took him into his 100th year. His every conversation shared with the club was stimulating, positive, cheeky and – often – about a Probus adventure. Betty Logan, the first woman to be President of the Waikanae Central Club remained active in the club until her death at 102. There have been many centenarians in the Waiuku Club whose birthdays are celebrated with a special morning tea and a birthday cake.



Marking milestones

The Milford Combined Club's twentieth anniversary celebration featured several of the club's foundation members, a number of whom remain actively involved in the club and maintain a close interest in its activities. The club's first President, Beverley Jones, assisted with cutting the twentieth anniversary cake with Warwick Smith, who was President of Milford Rotary Club at the time of the club's inauguration in 2003.



The Franklin Combined Club celebrated its foundation members, pictured with the President, Joy Walker. From left Vivienne Stembridge, Barbara Cooper, Betty Auld, Murray Auld, Ian Stembridge, Norma Walker

The oldest surviving inaugural member of the Mosgiel Ladies Club cut the cake at the club's silver jubilee celebrations. The cake was decorated with the blue and gold Probus colours.

Mangere Bridge members and the Te Atatu Ladies Club enjoyed similar cakes at their celebrations.



The Central Palmerston North Club produced a 70 page illustrated booklet '*The First Decade*' in 2016 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its foundation. A copy was given to each member free of charge.

The Te Atatu Ladies Club celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2015 with a luncheon at Soljan's Winery Estate, returning five years later to the same venue to celebrate the club's silver jubilee. Memorabilia given to members attending these milestones included items with the club's insignia; a blue pen, a note pad and coffee mug for 20 years, and a silver pen, wine glass and coaster for the 25th. Each year generous members have donated a decorated anniversary cake.

Influential people

The Bethlehem Club in Tauranga owes a great deal to Neville Hardy. Neville was the club's founder. He was a quiet man, reserved, very kind and always ready to assist. He never pushed his opinions but, when asked, he offered very wise counsel. His other enduring talent: being impossible to say NO to. Neville believed there was potential for a Probus club in Bethlehem, Tauranga. On behalf of Rotary, he hired the Bethlehem Community Church hall, and placed a column advertisement in the 'Sun', a local community newspaper. The plan was to form a steering committee. On Thursday 12th August 2010, Neville bought a couple of packets of biscuits, boiled the jug and catered for 14 people. Approximately 140 turned up. With apologies and word of mouth the numbers grew to 160.

Elizabeth Phillips, the first President of the Bethlehem Club was a very strong woman. Her first comment was, 'I am the master of delegation.' She also had a vision. She envisioned a small friendly club with a maximum of 80 members.



3. NOURISHING INTERESTS

Submissions from New Zealand Probus clubs demonstrate that a multiplicity of members' interests and enthusiasms can be contained within a club. The longevity of interest groups within various clubs is testament to their ongoing appeal.

Walking is a very popular activity. Three walking groups are among the 21 interest groups at the Combined Club of Hutt. 'A walk for everyone' is the club's theme.



The beauty of the natural world was appreciated by these walkers of the Porirua Club.

The Kapiti Central Combined Club has a MENZ group which tackles serious subjects including visiting the Life Flight Trust hangars at Wellington airport where they were inspired by the work of a plumber, Peter Button, to establish Life Flight after New Zealand's worst maritime disaster, the sinking of the *Wahine* at the entrance to Wellington Harbour on 10 April 1968.

Many of the interest groups which were formed when Waikanae Central Club was established in 1995 continue. These include gardening, walking, cycling, live theatre, cinema, travel, computers, wine appreciation and books.

The Combined Club of Hutt's other interest groups include music appreciation (2) book groups (2) travel, movies, arts and crafts (2) lunch (3) current affairs discussion, and pétanque. 'Dinner for 8 on the 8th' (which can involve 20 – 30 members) is a very popular group. The Gardening group has visited many significant gardens, shared cuttings and solved various gardening problems.





The Oherahi Club also enjoys gathering around the table.

Interest groups at the Mana Combined Club have included table tennis, ten pin bowls, cinema, dining out, pétanque, music, walking, excursions, cards, scrabble, play reading, ploughman's lunch, wine appreciation and craft.

The Waiuku Club offers several interest groups: walking, sketching, lunching, petrol heads, singing, storytelling, movies, crafts and books. In May 1997, a speaker at a meeting of the Ellerslie Club suggested 'writing for grandchildren'. The writing group was born and has endured for 21 years. About 7 or 8 members meet once each month and have a lot of laughs reading the stories and giving each other ideas.

The Glenfield Club maintains a movie group, a summer walking group, a book chat group and comes together for both ethnic and Sunday lunches. Monthly newsletters ensure that members know when each event is happening.

In the early days of the Rutherford Club in Nelson, interest groups included walkers, trampers, and photographers.





Arthur Davis of the Waterloo Club was extremely successful.

The Rutherford Club interest groups soon expanded to groups engaged in history, computers, four-wheel driving, embroidery and patchwork, movies, pétanque, gardening, genealogy, and dining. 'Guess Who's coming to Dinner' began early. The book group and mahjong began in 2006. Cycling and golf followed in 2007 with the 'Lunch Bunch' starting in 2011. Later came bridge and 'The Scribes'. The 'Looking Out' group is a relative newcomer providing a forum for discussion.





Members of the Rutherford Club embarked on the Alps to Ocean cycle trail.

The Rutherford-Nelson 4WD activities were legendary but have been supplanted by cycling, enhanced by the advent of e-bikes. A quarter of the members come regularly on the weekly rides – and for coffee of course – and many also ride the more challenging expeditions that are combined with club multi-day trips away.

The names of interest groups in the Rutherford-Nelson Club have changed in response to whim and fashion. Originally known as the 'Two Wheel Terrors' the riders are now content to be the 'Cycling Group', while 'Photographers' became the 'Happy Snappers', 'Patchwork' became 'Craft' and 'The Trampers' adopted the 'Social Climbers' name. Imagination was obviously at play on Monday morning walks when names such as 'Civilised Strollers', 'Flat Earth Walking Talking Society' and 'Magical Monday Womblers' appeared. In the last decade, the group name has remained more staid as simply 'The Monday Walkers'. The Ellerslie Club formed a walking group with the name 'Probus Moodlers'. To muddle is to indulge in 'long, inefficient, happy idling'. Walking should be a gentle occupation.

While the average age of the first members of the Chartwell Club, Hamilton, was possibly younger than the average age in 2024, the club still offers a range of regular activities for its members. While many of the groups offered in 1997 no longer exist, the club has a walking group, two craft groups, a camera club, a mahjong group, and a men's group.



Special interest groups in the Makino Club include garden appreciation, cards, scrabble, twilight croquet, pétanque, walking, opera in the cottage, book club, car rallies, an annual picnic and special lunches. There are others. The club's tea groups are particularly popular. The tea groups meet monthly in members' homes for a shared meal. These groups provide valuable added support especially to a member needing a helping hand. The Porirua Club has activity groups which provide socialising and good times. These have included: crafts, walking, movies, lunch and dinner groups, card playing and book club.

Covid changed the face of society in so many ways and Probus clubs were certainly not exempt. The Hauraki Plains Club, like many others, had to adapt and remodel itself to fit the new circumstances of the 2020s. As soon as Covid 19 lockdowns were over, the Christchurch South West Club launched an array of smaller group activities including movies, cribbage, knit and craft, pétanque, Court theatre, walking and coffee mornings. Several have continued.



Covid

During Covid 19 lockdowns, the Christchurch South West Club continued to publish monthly newsletters, as well as instituting a phoning list to maintain connectivity with members. The newsletters included poems by member Graham Freear.

LOCKDOWN By Graham Freear

Oh fellow Probians
Are you staying in your space
And is your determination taking pride of place.

We hope you're doing exercise
Like running round the home
Or cleaning all the surfaces
Or chatting on the phone.

Perhaps a bit more sleeping
Perhaps a talking book
Perhaps we'll learn a language
Or give 'tele' a close look.

Perhaps we'll clean the windows
And even wash the floors
No matter what you're doing
You're doing it in yours.

I hope life's going well
And we'll soon be on the road
Able to smile again
As we lift our heavy load.



The Epsom Combined Club found that the Covid 19 experience had a less than desirable outcome. The club had, over the years, grown to a healthy membership of 100 members. Many clubs found that regrouping after Covid lockdowns was difficult. Social distancing had made some members afraid to participate in meetings in crowded rooms. The membership fell. Fortunately, the club's mixed membership, where companionship and optimism prevail, has allowed the numbers to increase towards previous magic 100.

The Milford Club found that the arrival of COVID presented new challenges. On the positive side, COVID taught the club the value of social connections and their importance in preventing isolation and loneliness, a foundation plank in Probus philosophy. The Milford Committee quickly embraced the technology afforded by Zoom meetings and devised ways to keep in contact with members. A telephone tree was set up whereby each Committee Member made regular calls to a group of members. As well as the welcome conversations, there was an added benefit of developing new friendships during those long lockdown weeks and months.

During this time, the Milford newsletter editor adapted regular monthly issues and they became 'COVID editions', to which members submitted photographs, recipes, and interesting stories of their newly-discovered and re-discovered pastimes. Links were also on the club's website to PSPL's regular 'Staying Connected' series which provided a wealth of interesting and useful information, activities and news.

COVID struck during Alan Stevens's presidency of the Waterloo Club. Meetings were cancelled nine times between 2020 and 2022. The club sent out weekly newsletters to members, attaching jokes, stories and videos, hoping to maintain members' morale. The President also regularly phoned members, particularly those living alone. Some interest groups, including the readers, adopted Zoom meetings, and others resumed when the Government traffic-light system allowed – with restrictions – such as social distancing in the walking group. When the club was able to resume holding meetings, the caterer did not. The Secretary arranged individually bagged morning teas!



4. ACTIVITIES

Inventive activities help to keep clubs vibrant and active. Meetings at the Te Atatu Ladies Club have included Quiz selections, the extremely popular bi-annual 'soup and rolls' day, the occasional bingo games, fashion shows and celebrating Royalty: Queen Elizabeth's birthdays, milestones of her long reign, and King Charles's III Coronation. Members have participated in 'themed' meetings arranged for ANZAC Day, Mothers' Day, St Patrick's Day, Easter, Mardi Gras, spring (with floral 'bonnets') and, more recently, PROBUS Month. Members' birthdays are acknowledged with a card and chocolate and milestone birthdays are celebrated with an individualised cake.

Fashion parades conducted by the Ladies Probus Club of Papakura Central are always enjoyed by all, with members wearing the garments and showing off their catwalk skills.

The Ellerslie Club began its weekly games morning in 2011. The group plays Majhong, Rummikub, Scrabble and other games. In March 2018 a stitchcraft group began to meet once each month. The Epsom Club enjoys an annual Trivial Pursuit day. The club is delighted that so many names and numbers are stored in elderly brains, ready to pop out. Every month the Eastern Hutt Ladies Club has a 'cafe crawl' sampling the best coffee that Lower Hutt can offer with an ever-changing variety of cafes. The Kit Cat Club participated in the Celebration of Canterbury's 150 year anniversary. Some members dressed in period attire danced a delightful Quadrille, a dance fashionable in late 18th and 19th century European colonies. The Kit Cat Club also held a 'Not Strictly Ballroom' tea dance evening combined with the then newly formed Russley Club.

An annual picnic in January is one of the highlights of the Hutt Combined Club year. Each picnic has its own theme and there are team games and competitions with prize giving as a highlight. Several clubs, including Morrinsville, hold popular soup luncheons.



Supporting communities

Being active and engaged often means that Probians are involved in their wider communities and support important social causes. Probus clubs are not fundraising organisations and are not committed to community service in the same ways as Rotary clubs, but many clubs have developed relationships within their communities.



Life Flight is an essential service. The Kapiti Central Club admired the Trust's work.

Several members of the knitting group in the Christchurch South West Club made Trauma Teddy bears which were later presented to St John Ambulance, to give to traumatized young children in Ukraine. Over the years, the Maungaraki Wairarapa Club members have made knitted items and donated them to the Masterton neonatal unit for newborn babies. There have been lots of very lucky babies kept warm by these beautifully handmade items.

The Te Atatu Ladies Club has run an annual food collection to support the local Salvation Army. For some years members knitted and donated warm items to Middlemore Hospital and SHINE (Safer Homes in New Zealand Everyday), and more recently, to One Big Family. An artificial Christmas tree, donated to the children's ward at Waitakere Hospital, was decorated by members each year between 2006 and 2016.



5. EXPANDING HORIZONS

Guest speakers at Probus meetings are invaluable in stimulating interest and curiosity and in filling knowledge gaps.

The Mosgiel Ladies Club's list of guest speakers demonstrates a diversity of topics. Some interesting speakers over the years have been a prison chaplain, a marriage celebrant, a store detective, an antiques dealer, a popular local chef and a woman who had spent twelve years as a nun.

The Hauraki Plains Club has had some fascinating speakers including three NZ Police dog handlers who demonstrate the amazing abilities of their highly trained animals. To have a small pouch of marijuana hidden on your person and then have a dog come through the door with his handler, be walked along a line of people of whom you are one – and then have that dog suddenly sit down next to you and stare at you with concentrated interest is a unique experience.

The Eastern Hutt Ladies Club also has a speaker each month. They have included the Wellington harbour master who delivered a very informative and entertaining talk about his job. Another interesting speaker was a photographer and director of the TV program Country Calendar which every New Zealander will know as the longest running program in the country. It's been going longer than Probus! Two others of note were a representative from Zealandia, the famous fenced wildlife sanctuary in Wellington, a very popular place for tourists and locals alike and the Ignite Sports Trust coordinator, who spoke about the work they do with young people who are at risk of dropping out of school too early and often ending up on the slippery slope to a life of crime.

The Levin Combined Club has had many interesting guest speakers among them a journalist who worked at the White House and a coroner from Palmerston North. The Wellington Central Combined Club invited Dame Catherine Healy from the New Zealand Sex Workers Union. Dame Catherine was a wonderful speaker, had no notes, and dispelled many of the myths about the industry she has worked in for many years.



Guest speaker topics at the Maungaraki Wairarapa Club have included local history, growing tree crops, the ambulance service, mountain climbing, living in overseas locations, trips people have taken far and wide, scientific glass blowing and cheese making just to name a few.

Guest speakers at the Rolleston Club have included Dick Taylor, a Commonwealth Games gold medallist in 1974. His stories of his training before those Games held in Christchurch prompted much laughter. Joy Reid, a former Europe Correspondent for TVNZ regaled members with stories ranging from Royal weddings right through to reporting from stricken war zones. The most moving speaker was Peter Majendie who talked on planning, creating and implementing the exhibition involving the 185 white chairs following the devastating February 2011 Christchurch earthquakes.

The subjects chosen by speakers at the Stoke Combined Club have included motor bike touring in the Himalayas; Grey Power and Banking and 'How to recognise Scams'. Maia Hegglun, a local Nelson sculptor spoke of his commissioned work 'Taurapa' the steel sculpture on the Matai River embankment.

Being based in central Wellington, the Central Wellington Club has the advantage of a plethora of speakers to draw from, ranging from ex-politicians (both national and local), public servants, judiciary, diplomats and visiting firemen or women. In addition, there are research institutions, cultural organisations, art galleries and museums.

At least one guest speaker dressed to suit his topic. The first speaker of the Chartwell Club in Hamilton was a rose grower who arrived in his shorts and singlet. Among the wealth of excellent speakers at meetings of the Glenfield Club was a guest who brought along his pet terrier who sat and listened to his owner. Obviously, having heard the talk before, the dog stood up walked over to the piano and 'christened' it.



Club members can be engaging speakers. The Christchurch Kit Cat Club features members as 'guest' speakers. The meetings begin with a member speaking for about 15 minutes. Topics were not restricted but normally covered either personal life stories or hobbies or travel experiences. The Ellerslie Club also has a tradition of members' 'mini' speeches. Each monthly meeting of Rotorua East Club features an 'ice-breaker' speech by a member.

The Panmure Club has member 'mini' talks. At the Woburn Club, interesting Life and Times presentations display the rich backgrounds and experiences of members. The Hastings Windsor Club has 2 minute member speeches at its meetings. Members are thus able to share a memory from their life's journey.

The Levin Combined Club's own member speakers share stories of their many and varied lives and experiences. Many members are active in the community and have received local community and civic awards and appeared in the New Year Honours list.

A broader membership allows variation of subjects and experiences when it comes to the 10 minute talk segment of meetings of the Hauraki Plains Club. Members talk first hand of their experiences in being a volunteer firefighter or having done a skydive as a dare.

The Mana Combined Club has a slightly different form of member participation at meetings. Some members have been prepared to write, acquire costumes and perform roles to provide entertainment at our monthly meetings. This further expresses the club's aim to foster fun, friendship and fellowship.



5. GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

Outings



Always ready to learn: the Millford Combined Club listening attentively at the Te Hana Te Ao Marama Marae Maori Cultural Centre

Probians tend to be enthusiastic and experienced travellers, always willing to learn more on both extended trips and shorter outings nearer home. As one Probian expressed it, outings and trips enable Probians to enjoy 'excursions' which were never part of their school curricula.

Some clubs arrange bus trips and outings at irregular intervals.

Others, like Panmure and Papakura, organise monthly bus trips. The Isel Ladies Club had annual mystery bus tours which were well supported. The Mosgiel Ladies Club members have enjoyed mystery tours and the Hastings Windsor Club also developed a tradition of mystery trips. Trips have taken members to Waikato, Wanganui, Auckland and Wellington.



The Te Atatu Ladies Club learnt a great deal on their Sugarworks tour



The Combined Club of Hutt has visited Rangipo Underground Power Station, Clydesdales farm (towed round the paddock on a sled drawn by the Clydesdales!), a Recycling Centre, Ostrich Farm, Movie Centre, Kapiti (twice) and Mana Islands, Vineyards, Olive Groves, Life Flight Rescue Centre, RNZAF Ohakea, Police dog obedience training centre, Nga Manu Nature Reserve, a major grocery chain's warehouse, a large garden, a railway, Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre, Vintage Aviator Museum, Alpaca Farm, Stonehenge – the list goes on!

Trips every two months are a very popular and important part of the Rotorua East program. Being centrally located in the North Island, the club has easy access to the Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Taupo areas. Places like Ohope, Maketu, Tauranga and Waihi on the Pacific coastline are close enough for a day in the sun! Rotorua sits on a geothermal fault line which crosses the North Island so Rotorua East includes trips to the mud pools and geysers and all the tourist attractions in this area which include 18 lakes. The Tongariro National Park is close enough for a day's visit, so several trips have been made to the volcano Mt Ruapehu to ride the gondola up to the ski fields and café for lunch. There are brilliant panoramic views!

The joy of sharing a meal, whether lunch or dinner, features in the stories of many Probus clubs. The Woburn Club arranges monthly dinner outings.

The Blenheim Probus Club, established in 1992, demonstrates that club outings are not necessarily glamorous. Blenheim's interesting and rather different monthly outings have included a visit to their Council sewerage plant and ponds and a Marlborough bottling plant where a lot of Marlborough wines are bottled for export and local markets. Boat trips on the famous Marlborough Sounds included visiting a disused whaling station and a heritage sheep farm on Arapawa Island.





Stimulating curiosity and the thirst for knowledge is one of the great benefits of Probus membership. Here, members of the Kaiapoi Combined Club are examining and pondering on a sight at the Willowbank Wildlife Reserve .

A pause for reflection was the keynote for the Johnsonville Club when the members visited Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in Wellington, a place for New Zealanders to remember and reflect on the country's experience of war, military conflict and peacekeeping. Created in 2015, the Park is also a place for memorials from countries with which New Zealand has a shared military heritage. The United Kingdom's monument comprises a memorial tree taking the form of the trunks of an English Royal Oak and a New Zealand Pohutukawa intertwining to form one single canopy. A silhouette of a single soldier can be seen between the branches representing the union of two countries which have stood side by side in times of conflict and peace.

The Levin Combined Club makes an annual visit to its local Horowhenua College to meet and mingle with the students who have put their names forward for the Prefect team for the coming year. This is a great chance to keep in touch with the younger generation and to find out about their ambitions and goals – and it is great to see the students enjoy chatting with



'oldies'! The staff also values Probian input from these chats. In the following year the head student team comes to one of the Probus meetings – it is always of great interest to see who was actually elected.

The Maungaraki Wairarapa Club takes an interest in local businesses. The club has visited local food producing businesses, including a local bread making business which supplies the town and greater region. The club has visited a company which weaves and manufactures mohair into wonderful blankets, throws and assorted accessories. The club has also visited a local printing company which prints a wide array of printed materials for local and national companies.

The Milford Combined Club outings encompass wide-ranging experiences with visits to historic homes, gardens, speciality farms, art centres and boat rides. There is also cultural involvement such as the full day spent at the Te Hana Marae. There have also been opportunities to learn about different religions by visiting the Buddhist Temple, Jewish Synagogue and Anglican Holy Trinity Cathedral in Parnell, Auckland.

Life can be adventurous for members of the Stoke Central Combined Club in the Nelson-Marlborough region. They have enjoyed an exhilarating ride on the Skywire and a visit to hidden Second World War bunkers. The Christchurch Kit Cat Club combined exercise with an outing on Golf Croquet mornings at a local croquet club. The Waterloo Club promoted the annual golf tournament for Probus clubs in the Wellington area and donated a special trophy.

Between 2009 and 2013, the Waterloo Club offered 'A Probus-like meeting in a bus' which were memorable outings giving members low-cost and stress-free opportunities to learn about local and regional life.

The Eastern Hutt members have enjoyed visits to places as diverse as the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences where they had a most interesting look around one of NZs foremost scientific establishments, learning about the unique geology of the shaky isles, to Hills hat factory, where hats of all kinds are made, not just fashion hats. This factory supplies military and police headgear for New Zealand and overseas, particularly the Pacific nations.





The Thames Club went up, up and away

The Ellerslie Club mounts a poster at each meeting about the next outing with the words WHERE, WHEN, HOW MUCH prominently displayed so that members can make an informed decision.

Trips

Venturing overseas is by no means an unusual enterprise for New Zealand Probus club members. Members of the Chartwell Club, Hamilton, have enjoyed a trip between Adelaide and Ayers Rock and visited Floriade in Canberra as well as enjoying a Pacific Cruise.

The Christchurch Kit Cat Club also ventures far and wide. Two groups travelled to the Chatham Islands, a group visit Tasmania in 2004 for a tour of 9 days, 22 members undertook a tour to South Australia in 2011 and a small group visited Norfolk Island.

The Combined Club of Hutt has visited the Chatham Islands twice. The Waterloo Club has found overseas travel to be an exciting part of the club's activities. In 2006, fourteen members had a memorable week at a farm lodge on the Chatham Islands. Amazing meals featured whitebait, crayfish, blue cod, roast wild pork and even included a swan casserole. A local guide transported the travellers in his van each day with delicious packed lunches. Most of the group went home with large parcels of blue cod after an amazing week.



The Makino Club explored the Pacific



In 2009, eight members of the Waterloo Club joined fourteen Waikanae Probus Club members for Opera in the Ruins on Norfolk Island. Wonderful nightly concerts from Brisbane's Operatif! Opera and Song Company featuring NZ tenor Benjamin Makisi. The final night was beautiful music under the stars in the original prison ruins.

On a recent trip, the Manurewa Ladies Club steered through the Waikato fog, across the green pastures of the Hauraki Plains, through the township of Thames to the upper end known as Grahamstown arriving at The Goldmine Experience on the site of the Golden Crown Mine. Members were guided through the history of one of the largest 1868 'Gold Bonanza' strikes in New Zealand. The members heard the Stamper with huge beams roar into life – ear muffs were required – the noise would once have been constant during the days and probably the nights too! Hard hats on, torch in hand, the Manurewa ladies were led through one of the shafts into the hill meeting mannequins hard at work. Further along, the pick marks and quartz veins could be seen in the walls as there is still gold in the hills. Soon there was light at the end of the tunnel...

The Maungaraki Wairarapa Club tried a different approach for one of its trips. Members embarked on a trip to the South Island using only public transport. The trip started with a train ride to Wellington, then a Ferry to Picton, followed by a train to Christchurch. They travelled on the TranzAlpine Express to Greymouth, Where they spent a few days exploring the area which included gold mines, forestry, West Coast Pubs, and numerous other points of interest. They returned to Christchurch on the TranzAlpine Express and then flew to Wellington and caught the train back to Masterton. A huge amount of organising and a wonderful time was had.

Joining with other Probus clubs can be very enjoyable as the Franklin Club found In March 2023. The club embarked on an overnight trip from Helensville to Dargaville and back again on the Kaipara Harbour and along the Northern Wairoa River with Kaipara Harbour Tours on the Kewpie Too. They invited friends from Hobsonville Combined, Howick Combined and Ngatea Combined Probus Clubs to join them. A total of 22 people enjoyed this trip.





Powering along aboard the Kewpie Too



Onerahi members were happy in the Hobbit world

The Onerahi Club travelled on to the farm where the Hobbiton movie was set and where the 'Lord of the Rings' and the Hobbiton Trilogies were filmed by Sir Peter Jackson.

Onerahi members were joined by another group and found the tour guide to be a very articulate and witty young man who proceeded to outline the work which started in March 1999 to create 39 Hobbit cottages using untreated timber, plywood and polystyrene. An oak tree was bought in from Matamata and artificial leaves were bought in from Taiwan and wired onto the branches for the film 'Lord of the Rings' and for the Hobbit trilogy in 2009.

The cottages were all rebuilt of permanent materials and the oak tree which stands high above the village, or Shire, was an artificial tree made of steel and silicon. Like the oak from Matamata, the leaves were wired on, confusing the birds who landed on the leaves when the wind blew. It still looks very real. An artificial pond which was made for the film became a home for a colony of frogs whose croaking was drowning out the actors dialogue. So, the frogs were caught and relocated, only to return the following day. The first film took three months to make, the next only 12 days. At its peak there were over 500 people on site. The guide also described some of the "tricks" used by the filmmakers to get the results required. Very clever and funny! The walk around the 'Shire' takes about one and a half hours.



High spots for many members of the Russley Club are brilliantly planned, well managed tours. These tours, between five and twelve days long, always feature catering and accommodation of a high standard. There have been tours to most districts of the South and North Islands, as well as to most states of Australia. Russley believes that tours are not just informative, they are adventure, fellowship, and fun.



Seeking knowledge and understanding is one aspect of Probian life, but Probians are never afraid to have fun. The Rutherford Club in Nelson staged a Christmas ballet

Some trips can be memorable for all the wrong reasons. The Wellington Central Club endured a 13 hour ferry trip as strong winds prevented the ferry from berthing in Picton. The crossing usually three and a half hours. It is difficult to fully appreciate the wide open space of the Molesworth when you arrive at your hotel at 3.00 am and have to be on the road again at 7.30 am. The driver for the day proved to be a treasure trove of historical facts and anecdotes about the people and the places on the trip in the four wheel drive bus from Blenheim through the Taylor Pass, up the Awatere Valley to Molesworth Station.



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

For Probus clubs all over New Zealand, 2024 was a very special year marking the Golden Jubilee of Probus in the South Pacific. From its beginning with the Kapiti Coast Club, the Probus movement has spread through New Zealand from north to south. The Honourable Casey Costello, Minister for Seniors, in her letter of congratulations highlighted the significance of Probus:

‘The service and tireless commitment of each club to connecting with and supporting older people over the last 50 years has made a positive contribution to many communities across New Zealand’.

‘Friendship, Fellowship and Fun’, the Probus motto, has proved to be an accommodating umbrella covering a rich variety of activities and actions.

The Golden Jubilee has been marked in many ways. Probus South Pacific Limited issued a special booklet full of useful information for clubs to use during the Golden Jubilee year. A striking 50 years’ logo, highlighting the blue and gold Probus colours, was designed to adorn everything from a congratulatory certificate available to each Probus member to a special gift set marking the anniversary





A sample media release was included in the anniversary booklet. Before long, items about Probus and its Golden Jubilee appeared in newspapers. In Nelson, a photograph was published showing the Probus South Pacific chair, Michael Ransom and Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough district Probus Chair, Robin Johansen cutting the Golden Jubilee cake at the celebration at the Nelson Golf Club. Michael Ransom and the Probus South Pacific chief executive officer, Silvana Martignago spoke at the party. The importance of Probus in combatting isolation among the elderly was emphasised. A performance by the steampunk band the 'Mafficking Whooperups' ensured that Probians would be seen as 'with it'.



The large cake enjoyed by members of the Christchurch Club

On 13 November 2024, the Blenheim Sun included a photograph of Blenheim members, Christine Hipkins, Ann Soal and Elaine Warner on page 3 beneath the headline, '50 years of Probus'. The Blenheim Club celebrated with a morning tea at Lansdowne Park attended by the Mayor. A special cake was the highlight. Celebratory cakes have become a Probus keynote followed by the Christchurch Club with its richly decorated cake featuring the Golden Jubilee symbol and the Probus colours.



Kapiti Coast, the club where it all began, celebrated its first 25 years by suggesting that clubs contribute to the compilation of a time capsule to be held in the Probus South Pacific office. 1 December 2024 was set as the date for unveiling the time capsule. Kapiti Coast was busy with Golden Jubilee celebrations. There was a photographic competition and a poetry and short story competition as part of its celebrations. The 13 entries were assessed. Jasmine Thompson won the short story contest with her entry, 'Shoes' and the winning poem was 'Dishwasher Duet' by Ellen Hannigan. The entries were compiled into a small booklet for members to download and enjoy.

On 30 July 2024, The NZ Herald anticipated the grand days of celebration with an article about the club and the planned gala luncheon at the Southward Car Museum in early November where past and present members of the Kapiti Coast Club would be welcomed. The Kapiti Coast President, Richard Chilton was photographed complete with the club's 'chain' of Presidents' names.

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Book the date for special lunch

Probus club preparing for its 50th anniversary celebrations

David Haxton

The Probus Club of Kapiti Coast's 50th anniversary will be marked with a celebration lunch later in the year.

Club president Richard Chilton said about 180 people were expected to attend the gala luncheon at Southward Car Museum in early November.

"It's shaping up to be a special event for our club, which was the first Probus club to be founded in the South Pacific.

"Past and present members will be attending as well as several guests.

"We've had a lot of donations from local businesses and individuals to help with the luncheon, which we're very appreciative of."

Chilton said the club started towards the end of 1974 on the initiative of

Paraparaumu businessman Gordon Roatz.

"In 1973, Gordon, a member of the Rotary Club of Paraparaumu, visited family in Scotland and was invited to a Probus club meeting sponsored by the local Rotary club.

"A seed was planted in Gordon's mind about starting a Probus club in New Zealand.

"Following his return to Kapiti, he placed an advertisement in a local newspaper which led to the establishment of a committee with three other Rotarians.

"The first meeting was convened on November 5, 1974, with 12 in

attendance and this was the basis on which the club was formed."

The purpose of the club was to renew acquaintances each month with former working colleagues who lived on the coast.

Initially a men's organisation, the club moved in 2004 to encompass women.

"Membership rose by 40 new members in 1976 and steadily increased to a peak of over 200 in the early 1990s. Today is steady with about 120 members, with new members more than welcome."

Regular monthly meetings are held in the Ocean Road Community Centre, Paraparaumu Beach, with a 10-minute talk by a club member and then a guest speaker.

There are active interest groups ranging from walking, wine appreciation, books, dining, travel and trips.

"The club is very well placed for the next 50 years."

Richard Chilton

50th ANNIVERSARY 1974 - 2024 **PROBUS** IN NEW ZEALAND

It's shaping up to be a special event for our club



Celebrations of significant milestones are always important. However, clubs all over New Zealand continue to plan a vigorous future. The Kapiti Coast Club, for instance, has thought carefully about the joys and challenges to come. Maintaining relevance was predicted to be an important consideration. Kapiti Coast recognises that its community continues to include a significant number of retirees, many of whom have come from other places. The club plans to reach out to more recent members of the community to provide a forum where they can meet new people, find activities that interest them and support them in leading meaningful and worthwhile lives.

The club anticipates that interest groups within the club will continue to be important in keeping the club active and alive. Carpool outings and automobile adventures are planned to involve as many members as possible so that the normal monthly meeting is not the only opportunity to meet and mix with like-minded people.

Richard Chilton has recognised that complacency can be a challenge. Members are happy to attend meetings, but many are reluctant to help with the administration of the club. Kapiti Coast realises that it could be a continuing battle to persuade members to step up and help run the club. Richard Chilton is, however, optimistic: 'We have survived 50 years – with good management we can look forward to the next 50 years'.



GOVERNMENT HOUSE EVENT



CONCLUSION

Many clubs have looked to the future and recognised that both challenges and opportunities lie ahead.

The Hauraki Plains Club believes that people get out of life what they put into it – and so it is with Probus and thinks that it would be fascinating to be able to look into the future and see how the Probus concept has developed. Who knows, maybe Trips and Treats will be running trips to Mars!

Makino members say that most Probians are happy people and that this is contagious, Probus opens the door to new friendships, new experiences and new horizons. The outings offer social interaction and benefit members' physical and mental wellbeing. Probus, Makino feels, provides the social interaction which helps members to settle into retirement.

Pat Fargher, a life member of the Thames Club believes that we need friends more as we age; we need people to listen to us, friends to enjoy time with, to laugh with and to help us get a spring back in our steps. Having enjoyed the benefits from embracing the principles of Probus friendship for more than 33 years, Pat encourages all members to take every opportunity to make a new friend.

The Otari Club summed up its view of the benefits of Probus: keeping up particularly when club members are retired or semi-retired. This is a critical role the Otari club believes must continue. As well as being a social club bringing together a wide range of people from all walks of life for the enjoyment of each other's company, Probus clubs also help to fill a knowledge gap.

The range of guest speakers at the Otari Club has addressed a real need. Members soak up information about the things that are changing in the world around us. There will be many changes in the future. So far, speakers have covered a diverse range of topics including:



1. Artificial Intelligence
2. Marketing our weather forecasting system
3. Re-introduction of Kiwi into the Wellington hill suburbs
4. The use of intelligent lighting in film and theatre
5. The management of our oral history
6. Environmental issues
7. Broadcasting in New Zealand
8. NZ Politics

The list could go on. Probus is a way of keeping older people thinking and challenging understandings of the world. Otari Probus Club prides itself on the quality of their speakers and the fact that they give members that challenge. The Otari Club promotes critical thinking.

In the 25th anniversary history of the Russley Club, the founding President, Roger Murdoch, reflected on the factors which made the club successful:

- A good well-located venue with built in morning tea catering.
- Interesting guest and club member talks.
- Day trips were important early on for members to get to know each other.
- Those involving bus travel and lunch built in have been especially popular.
- The longer trips have been a major contribution towards the special developing Russley culture which is well known outside the club.
- The committee's handling of the difficult three years of Covid.
- It will be interesting to see how these characteristics evolve as the future unfolds.

The Porirua Club believes that Probus is all about enjoying the fellowship of like-minded people by getting to know other active retirees in the local community. The Stoke Central Combined Club describes itself as focused on a timeless recipe: a continued quest to learn, social interaction and 'good old' plain fun.

Clubs all over New Zealand are compiling calendars of meetings, speakers, trips and outings and planning to support their communities. The second 50 years will be as busy as the first.



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As we celebrate 50 remarkable years of PROBUS, let's take a moment to journey down the memory lane and reflect on the rich history that brought us here. From its humble beginnings as a space for retired professionals to connect, PROBUS has grown into a vibrant and cherished community built on fun, friendship and shared experiences.

This golden milestone is a tribute to the dedication, spirit and camaraderie that have defined PROBUS through the decades - a legacy built by its members and one that continues to inspire...!