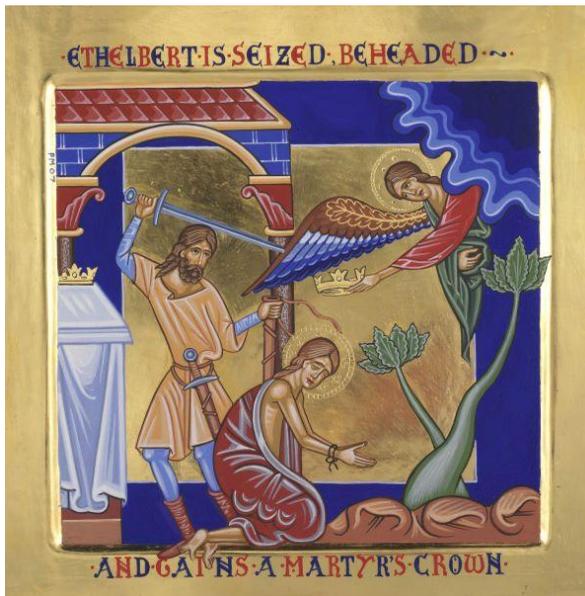


Hereford Saint Ethelbert Probuz Club

Our Purpose

To provide a regular meeting point for retired, professional and business men, particularly for those who would appreciate and value, in their retirement, increased social contact and the opportunity for meeting others in similar circumstances.

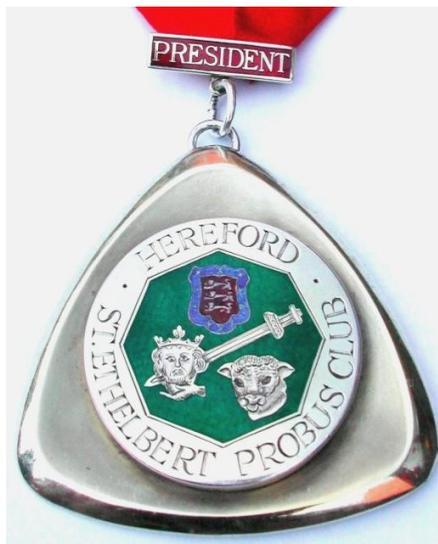


Hereford Saint Ethelbert Probus Club

meets at The Cider Museum, Pomona Place, Hereford HR4 0EF
every Tuesday morning

President - John Platts

Past Presidents



1978/79 Raymond Webster
1979/80 Raymond Webster
1980/81 Dick Ankersen
1981/82 Harry Culliss
1982/83 Bill Ashelby
1983/84 Norman Paget
1984/85 Frank Hall
1985/86 Tom Stephenson
1986/87 Colin Hughes-Cound
1987/88 Tom Paxton
1988/89 Stan Yeates
1989/90 Herbert Penhale
1990/91 Harold James
1991/92 Gerald Farnsworth

1992/93 Reg Kendle
1993/94 Michael Morris
1994/95 Ted Wright
1995/96 Harry Spencer
1996/97 David Mitchell
1997/98 Ron Morgan
1998/99 Cyril Revers
1999/00 Paddy Lowry
2000/01 Don Harding
2001/02 Les Hart
2002/03 Mack Russell
2003/04 Sydney Trenchard Morgan
2004/05 Don Lane
2005/06 Peter Dooley
2006/07 Mike Gammage
2007/08 Sydney Trenchard Morgan
2008/09 Danny Morgan
2009/10 John Kinross
2010/11 Roger Lloyd
2011/12 Tony Wilce
2012/13 Randy Langford
2013/14 Douglas Lay
2014/15 Arthur Rowe
2015/16 Jeff Jones
2016/17 John Platts
2017/18 Roger Lloyd
2018/19
2019/20
2020/21

History of Hereford St. Ethelbert Probus Club

The Hereford St. Ethelbert PROBUS club was inaugurated on 10th October 1978, and became the second PROBUS club in Hereford. It was formed because the first Hereford club, which had been initiated by the City of Hereford Rotary Club 10 years earlier, was swamped with requests to join. Reverend Raymond Webster, Vicar at Holy Trinity Church at Whitecross, was our first president, and held this post for the club's first two years. Our constitution was agreed at the inaugural meeting and first Annual General Meeting, which was held at the Greyfriars Hotel. St. Ethelbert is the patron saint of Hereford, and the cathedral is dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin and St. Ethelbert the King.

The purpose of the club, which is 'non-political, non-sectarian and non-profit making', was described thus: *'to provide a regular meeting point for retired professional and business men, particularly for those who would appreciate and value, in their retirement, increased social contact and the opportunity for meeting others in similar circumstances'*.

Our first meeting place was The Antelope in Barton Road. In 1997 we moved to The Salmon Inn in Hampton Dene Road, then the Black Lion Inn in Bridge Street in 2000, the Courtyard Theatre in 2003 and the Bay Horse Inn in Kings Acre Road in 2006. We moved to the Kindle Centre in 2010 and to our current meeting place, the Cider Museum, in 2013. We have been fortunate in our choice of meeting places, only changing venue through unforeseen circumstances beyond our control - in two cases we had only a few hours' notice.

The minutes of Annual General Meetings over the years show that the club has tried various means of collecting subscriptions and costs of refreshment at meetings (before arriving at our current system of quarterly payments in 2004), as well as making changes to levels of subscription and to its constitution. Membership levels have varied right up to our maximum of 40, a number we are close to today. During the 1980s, there was a considerable waiting time to join us, such was the strength and interest in our club.

There have been many extra activities including social events, days out and longer visits. We do not exist to support charities and other good causes but, over the years, we have made many donations via speakers who support such organisations. Our club's scrapbook includes photographs of past and current members – well worth browsing together with our website

www.stethelbertprobus.uk

At the time of writing, the club, which is now one of four in Hereford, is approaching its 39th anniversary and has a strong membership. We have weekly meetings with varied speakers and club activities, healthy finances and a regular programme of social events which include our wives.

Our wives also get together informally once a month for coffee. We keep in contact with the wives of members no longer with us, and invite them to be our guests at our Christmas lunch. The founding members would surely be pleased to see that what they started in 1978 is still going strong.



Greyfriars



Antelope



Salmon



Black Lion



Courtyard



Bay Horse



Kindie Centre



Cider Museum

St. Ethelbert - murdered by King Offa of Mercia 794 AD

At Marden, on the east bank of the River Lugg, stands a small church. Within a few yards of this quiet place, Ethelbert, the young king of East Anglia, was brutally assassinated on the orders of Offa, King of Mercia.

Many versions of the story have appeared, making it hard to distinguish fact from fiction. On the one hand, facts are known about Offa from early accounts. On the other, little is known of Ethelbert that did not come from church authorities, intent on promoting a new saint.

At the start of Offa's reign, 757 AD, England consisted of a number of small kingdoms in constant dispute with each other. Mercia was the largest of these and occupied a central position. To the north was Northumbria, to the south were the kingdoms of Wessex, Essex, Sussex and Kent. To the east was East Anglia and to the west was Wales. This gave Mercia great strategic advantage, which Offa exploited to the full.

In 760 AD, King Offa led Mercia to a major victory over the Welsh at Hereford. In 774 AD, he subdued Wessex and Kent and, shortly after, proclaimed himself King of England, even minting his own coinage.

In 782 AD, Offa completed the construction of a defensive earthwork, Offa's Dyke, to mark the border between Mercia and Wales. It is visible for much of its length but no longer marks the official boundary between England and Wales.

While Offa may have been effectively King of England, in practice it was not so. To the east there was the independent kingdom of East Anglia. So, when Ethelbert inherited the East Anglian crown from his father, Aethelred, Offa began a campaign to annexe the territory,

Duncumb, 1812 says *'the valour of Ethelbert defeated Offa's attempts to annexe the country of the East Angles and peace was established'*. He was therefore one of the most eligible princes in Europe. So, when Ethelbert proposed marriage between himself and Offa's daughter, Aelfrida, Offa was under pressure to accept. The marriage was intended to cement the peace, but it would have prevented Offa from achieving his lifetime's ambition - to be truly the ruler of all England.

A message from Offa's palace (not at Hereford, but at Marden, perhaps on the site of a 5th c Iron Age hill fort known as Sutton Walls) was sent to the East Anglian court accepting the offer of marriage, and inviting Ethelbert to marry the Princess Aelfrida without delay. Thinking himself to be safe from harm, King Ethelbert travelled with only a small number of soldiers.

His journey to Marden was not without incident. At one point, *'the earth shook beneath his horse as he attempted to mount [and] darkness fell suddenly at midday'*, (Lawrence-Smith, 1990). However, the devout Christian Ethelbert urged his followers to throw themselves on the ground while he prayed.

As they passed deeper into Mercia, the young king was plagued by nightmares. *'He saw the roof of his own palace sinking and the corners of his bridal bed collapse.'*

Next he glimpsed his mother standing near, weeping tears of blood. He saw a tree, growing up through the centre of his house and men chopping at the roots until a torrent of blood flowed forth'. Finally, he saw 'a column of light more splendid than the sun, and a wonderful bird with gold tips to its wings soaring upwards into the sublime harmony of heaven',

Some accounts place the blame for his murder on Offa's wife, Queen Cynethrida, who, for political gain, planned his death. A luxurious chair was placed over a trap door in the young king's room, and he was tipped from it into a dungeon, captured, bound and beheaded with his own sword.

The unique 13thc Hereford Breviary has another version: *'The Queen, on seeing Ethelbert's beauty was violently enamoured, and could not control her desires. She revealed her shameful thoughts by the expression of her eyes. The chaste youth, fearing God, abhorred so great a wickedness and fled from her.'* In a furious rage, Cynethrida went to Offa and convinced him that his future son-in-law planned to seize Mercia and unite England after Offa's death. After 37 years on the throne, the old king must have been aware that his days were drawing to a close and Offa recognised that although this marriage of his daughter might advance his claims over East Anglia, it might also enable their heirs to inherit Mercia.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records simply: *"In the year 794, Offa, King of the Mercians commanded the head of King Aethelberht to be struck off".* Whatever the truth of it, Ethelbert's body was thrown into the marshes nearby.

Osbert of Clare (12th c) wrote: *"Offa's daughter mourned the young king, and expressing abhorrence of the wickedness of her parents vowed to give herself up to the service of God and live as an anchorite at Croyland."*

Offa immediately proclaimed the annexation of East Anglia. He was now in control of England, but the legitimacy of his claim was suspect. While this remained so, he began to worry about the consequences of his actions. When rumours spread that the spirit of Ethelbert had been seen like a heavenly glow above the swamp where his body lay, Offa was desperate to seek absolution from the Pope.

Pope Adrian imposed a number of conditions on the grant of absolution, namely that Offa should pay for the canonization of Ethelbert. First, he was to build a church at Marden dedicated to the Virgin Mary at the place where Ethelbert's body lay. He was to build a stone church at Hereford, dedicate it to St. Ethelbert and translate the saint's body there. There had, in fact, been bishops of Hereford since 676AD, so there may have been a church on the site already.

Offa immediately tried to fulfil these terms. When Ethelbert's body was recovered, a spring appeared at the site. This can be seen today in a small room dedicated to the saint at the west end of Marden church. It is said to be miraculous because the water remains clear even when the nearby River Lugg is in flood. At the west end of Castle Green there is St Ethelbert's Well, said to mark the spot where his Ethelbert's body rested on its journey to the cathedral.

The Missal for the Feast of Saint Ethelbert tells the story that when the saint's remains were being moved to Hereford, his severed head fell from the cart. A blind man stumbled upon it and his sight was miraculously restored. Other miracles were recorded and a flourishing cult developed, drawing many pilgrims to his shrine. King Offa's own earthly triumph was short-lived, as he died in 796 AD and the son who succeeded him died 141 days later.

In 1055 AD, St. Ethelbert's shrine, ornaments and relics were destroyed, when Bishop Athelstan's small stone cathedral was sacked and seven priests were murdered by the Welsh Prince Gruffudd and his ally Earl Aelfgar. The saint's head may have been moved to Westminster Abbey for safe keeping.

At the foot of the steps of the cathedral's Lady Chapel, encircling a pillar, is a series of beautiful modern icons, illustrating St. Ethelbert's story. His Saint's Day is May 20th, and the ancient St. Ethelbert's Fair survives in the form of the Hereford May Fair to this day.

Constitution

1. TITLE.

The Club shall be called the Hereford Saint Ethelbert Probus Club.

2. MEMBERSHIP.

- a) Membership shall be open to all professional and business men who have fully retired from business or profession which is also deemed to include all part-time gainful employment, at the discretion of the Committee.
- b) An applicant for Membership shall be introduced by an existing Member, and his application approved by the Committee.
- c) The total Membership shall not exceed Forty (40), (excluding honorary, long term sick or incapacitated Members), but a Waiting List will be maintained and considered as and when vacancies arise. Honorary Members will retain their voting rights.
- d) All Members shall make a minimum attendance of seventeen Meetings per annum. If any Member fails to do so, he shall automatically lose his Membership, unless the Committee rule otherwise, after considering the circumstances that precluded his attendance.

3. CONSTITUTION.

- a) There shall be a President, a Vice-President who is also President-Elect, an Honorary Secretary, an Honorary Treasurer, and an Honorary Social Secretary, and the affairs of the Club shall be managed by a Committee consisting of these Officers and three others who shall take office at the Annual General Meeting.
- b) The President of the Club shall automatically retire from office on completion of one year in the chair,-but he shall automatically become an ex-- officio Member of the Committee for the year following his retirement.
 - i. If no nominations are received for the post of Vice-President and the President-Elect, a former President may stand again for Office, for a further period of one year if elected, and then retire, but then would not be subject to Rule 3 (b).
- c) One third of the Ordinary Committee retire each year. A Member of the Ordinary Committee shall serve for a period of 3 years only, but a retiring Member may offer himself for re-election after a period of at least 3 years.
- d) Four Members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum and the Committee shall have powers to co-opt and to appoint one or more sub-Committee s .
- e) Officers shall be elected by secret ballot in accordance with the agreed procedure, viz.:
 - ii. Nominations shall only be with the expressed consent of the Nominee.
 - iii. All Members shall be entitled to vote.
 - iv. If there are more than two nominations for the office of President-Elect, there shall be a second ballot to determine which of the two candidates who topped the first poll shall be elected, unless one has more than 50 % of all votes cast.
 - v. Two Tellers shall be nominated by the Committee to count the votes.

4. MEETINGS.

Meetings shall be held weekly at a time and location agreed by the Members.

An Annual General Meeting shall be held in March of each year as may be determined by the Committee, and at least three weeks notice of such a Meeting shall be given to all Members.

The Honorary Secretary shall call a Special General Meeting on the written request of not less than five Members, and shall give to Members at least three weeks notice of such a Meeting.

Voting at all Meetings shall be by show of hands or by ballot if so determined.

In the event of an equal division of votes, the Chairman of the Meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

5. SUBSCRIPTION.

The Subscription shall be reviewed annually.

When a Member reaches 90 years of age, he shall become an Honorary Member and no longer be called upon to pay an Annual Subscription.

6. ACCOUNTING.

An Income and Expenditure Account for the period to the end of December of each year shall be prepared and presented for approval at the Annual General Meeting, after examination by a Member duly appointed.

7. BANKING.

The Bankers shall be as determined by the Committee. Cheques are to be signed by any two of four authorised signatories to be the Honorary Secretary, the Honorary Treasurer and two other current or former Officers of the Club as approved by the Committee.

In the event of the winding-up of the Club, its assets shall be dispersed to local Charities as decided by Members.

8. GUESTS.

Members may introduce guests providing that the same guest shall not be brought to a Meeting more than four times a year.

**The club shall be non-political
Non-sectarian
and non-profit making**

Michael Morris

1924 to 2015



President 1993 to 1994

Michael was, at the time of his death, the most senior member of the club and also one of the earliest members, having joined on 14th February 1984.

Michael was a Herefordian through and through, having been born and brought up in the city. His was a world of music, as both his parents were musicians. He started singing in All Saints' choir with them when

he was very young. At nine years of age, he won a choral scholarship to Hereford Cathedral School, and, from then on until his final days, his world revolved around the Cathedral.

Ron Morgan, one of the senior members of the club, first met Michael in 1935, when he himself had won a scholarship, and Michael, as second chorister, became Ron's boss. They remained firm friends through the years.

Michael lived and worked in local government in the city, and very seldom left it. Although he rarely talked about it, Michael had a hard and harrowing war, and considered himself to be very lucky to come through unscathed. He was in Burma, and one of the lucky few to make it ashore, when a massive air drop went wrong and hundreds of parachutists were dropped into the sea instead of onto the coast. He then fought his way up through Italy and Europe.

Michael had many interests and was a very well known character, with a vast number of friends from all walks of life. Walking through Hereford with Michael was always a long process, as so many people stopped to speak to him. He usually parted with one of his seemingly unending supply of jokes – many of them sometimes even worse than Randy's.

He was, for some fifty years, the choral master of Hereford Choral Society, having taken over this task from another Probus member, the centenarian Percy Arrowsmith.

One thing which Michael always held dear was belonging to Probus, here he enjoyed the company of so many different people from so many occupations.

He was proud of the St. Ethelbert Club, and became so keen a member that, when on holiday in Aberystwyth, about the furthest he ever went, he would often come all the way back for the Tuesday morning meeting. He attended regularly until illness made it impossible.

He was proud of the club, and the club was proud to have had him as a member. He was a great friend to many and he will be greatly missed.



February 2017



April 2011