

'A DORSET lad's brush with Medicine' was the title of retired GP Andy Rogers's talk at Kyrle Probus Club's recent meeting. In a hugely entertaining and informative presentation to an appreciative audience, it turned out to be rather more than just a 'brush.'



He began by painting a picture of an idyllic upbringing in Dorset, surrounded by such evocative places as Durdle Door and the Jurassic Coast, the Cerne Giant, Portland Bill, Shaftsbury, Milton Abbass, while enjoying such local products as Blue Vinny cheese and Dorset knobs.

Andy punctuated his talk with the observation 'I'm lucky to be here now,' beginning with the fact that he was born prematurely at 4 1/2lbs and wasn't expected to survive. In the absence in those days of a baby incubator, he was put in an airing cupboard to aid his recovery.

He had another 'lucky to be here' episode when as a teenager and now in Blandford Grammar School, he had read in a magazine Scientific American, how to build a rocket.

using zinc dust and sulphur. His rocket didn't go off the first time, nor the second time, but when he went to pick it up, it did go off, with the result that he lost his index finger and thumb.

A doctor was able to build him a new thumb and some time later, his mother saw their chickens pecking at something in the field. It was his index finger and he still has it to this day – but not on his hand.

Having studied natural sciences at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, he switched to medicine and continued his clinical training at Exeter College, Oxford and John Ratcliffe Hospital.

Having qualified from Oxford, part of his GP training took him to the old County Hospital in Hereford and in January 1979 he joined Pendeen surgery in Ross.

He recalled that his first night visit was to Symmonds Yat. It was snowing and it was dark and he had to reach a patient up on The Doward. He also recalled that Ross Cottage Hospital was able to carry out X-rays, which made a GP's life much more fulfilling. So what had he learned in his long career in medicine?

Defining good health was not easy. It was not length of life that mattered, but the quality of life, he suggested. He also felt that people were incredibly brave in illness. The potential cost of medicine was bottomless, he said, but in his view, it was immunisation that had had the greatest impact in medicine.

