

## Members Bowled Over by a Maiden

Kyrle Probus Club members always look forward to hearing a new member's first talk and Mike Stares' was no exception. Its title was 'My Life in Journalism' and clearly they were anticipating inside stories, hot gossip and perhaps even some dishing of the dirt!

Mike's career started in the 1960's, not as he had anticipated with the Daily Express who declined even to answer his aspiring letter, but with the Buckinghamshire Advertiser. This was in the days of 'hot metal' printing when the front page of a proper newspaper covered important topics such as a full list of the attendees at a dignitary's funeral. Other local papers followed but a stint in Doncaster interviewing the celebrities who were appearing at the many working men's clubs in the area proved to be a great training ground ... interviewing the Beatles looks good on anyone's CV.

After a spell in America Mike returned home to the UK and got married ... and with this additional responsibility he decided it was an appropriate moment to go freelance and set up his own news agency! It was a precarious existence initially, but fortunately he and his new bride chose to live in Tetbury in Gloucestershire which became the centre of the 'Royal Triangle', which was always the source of a good story. A subsequent move to Swindon also proved propitious as at one time it was one of the fastest developing towns in Europe with many business re-locating to new HQs.

But journalism was changing as was the technology - 'citizen's journalism' was taking hold and it was becoming increasingly difficult to be adequately remunerated for articles or features - time for another change of direction, this time linking in with education colleges to run journalism and writing courses!

A lively question time ensued which brought forth more anecdotes and 'trade secrets'. (The essential elements of a good story are ... mystery, crime, sex and religion, though not necessarily in that order.) A good eye-catching headline is also essential ... and so it was that **'Members Were Bowled Over by a Maiden'** speech.