

Denbigh and District Probus Club Christmas meeting

Members of the Denbigh and District Probus Club and their guests enjoyed a wonderful Christmas lunch at the Oriel Hotel, St Asaph at their December meeting and AGM.

The speaker after lunch was Gareth Foulkes from Llandyrnog, near Denbigh and he explained how our soils were starting to develop over four billion years ago including the first signs of life on planet earth, microbes dissolving minerals, blue green algae, fungi, plants in water followed by plants on earth which eventually led to the human civilisation starting about seven million years ago.

He outlined how the tilling of fields and seeding and growing of crops has left our soils degraded, with mechanisation speeding up the degrading process leading to us probably having only 50% of the soil left that we first had.

The importance of soil for growing crops, filtering and cleaning water, reducing flooding, and regulating our atmosphere was highlighted and how the addition of artificial fertilizers and organic matter has minimal impact on reversing the soil degradation.

Gareth has been researching and implementing regenerative farming methodologies at his agricultural holding for a few years now and has seen how minimising soil disturbance and maximising crop diversity together with alternative cropping and grazing methodologies can start, very slowly, to reverse this soil damage.

He believes it is essential to keep a living root in the soil at all times and integrating livestock is key. He acknowledges that regenerative farming has received some bad press but believes strongly that it is the fastest way to improve soil. Plants are needed at different root

depths and any compaction from heavy machinery or erosion, should be avoided.

He explained that his livestock waste about 70% of the grass he grows as he lets it mature to quite a length but he uses no fertilizer and year on year, the yields in the fields are increasing. Gareth believes that the only way to achieve regenerative practice is if 70% of the grass is trampled in and the grass grown is of differing original variants such as Timothy and Cocksfoot which do not usually grow any more, together with legumes and herbs. He emphasised that we should not be using grasses which have been bred and need artificial fertilizers to perform.

There were many questions and further discussions around soils and regenerative farming and members agreed that they would like to visit Gareth's farm in the future to explore the topic further.

The next meeting will be on Monday 8th January 2024 when Celia Drew will speak about Canadians at Kinmel Bay Camp.

The following meeting will be on Monday 5th February when Rufus Adams' talk is 'From Vancouver to Toronto'.

New members are always warmly welcomed.

For further information have a look at the club web site

denbighprobud.com or contact –

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