

An Extinct Chinese Blossom

Members and guests of the Denbigh and District Probus Club enjoyed their March meeting with a wonderful meal at Tweedmill, St Asaph, followed by a talk titled **An Extinct Chinese Blossom** delivered by club member Carole Crosby.

Born and raised in Ruthin, Carole trained as a physiotherapist in Manchester. She emigrated to Canada and completed her intensive care training in Toronto. After 6 years in Canada, Carole moved to Hong Kong where she was the only Intensive Care Therapist in the colony and so had a massive workload.

Apart from administration Carole spent most of the last 13 years of her time in Hong Kong specialising in "below elbow trauma". Notably she was on one of the first World Wide teams working on Toe to Hand Transplants (replacing severed thumbs with second toes). More gruesomely and more frequently trying to regain some function for members and victims of Triad gang battles whose arms and hands had been slashed into pieces.

On request of her husband, she retired as Acting Colony Superintendent to return to Wales in 1990.

Carole talked about the dreadful practice of Foot Binding, a Chinese custom of folding/dislocating/breaking and tightly binding the feet of young girls to change their shape and size to achieve the shape of a Golden Lotus. "Golden Lotus" - a woman's foot no bigger than 4 inches long from heel to toe and no wider than 1½ inches wide.

During her orthopaedic work in Hong Kong, she came across evidence of the practice in elderly ladies she was treating whose feet were very deformed because of foot binding (they usually had hip fractures due to the inability to walk with stability because of the foot binding their early youth). Ladies with their feet bound had no calf muscles as they could not move their ankles.

It was difficult to identify when the practice started or why, but it was thought it stemmed from Ladies of the Court wanting to be in favour and catch the emperor's eye.

Mutilation of girl's feet started at about 3-5 years of age when they were regularly tightly bound with wet bandages to fold the toes under and reform the foot shape to eventually leave only the big toe and heel to walk on. Each time the children's feet were re-bound, they were made to walk around on them to assist in changing the foot shape. The whole process took about 3 years. 10% of children who had their feet bound died of gangrene.

The practice finished in 1901-1911 but because of the remoteness of many areas in the country, the practice continued for quite a few years.

Members were shocked to hear there had been such a tradition and following the talk looked carefully at the exhibition of the footwear from China that Carole had collected as well as casts of the feet of a lady whose feet had been bound as a child.

The next Denbigh and District Probus Club meeting will be on **Monday 7th April 2025 at Tweedmill in St Asaph**, when Tony Griffiths will show a film titled **Abergele Train Disaster**.

New members are always warmly welcomed to the Denbigh and District Probus Club meetings.

For further information have a look at the club web site denbighprobus.com or contact stevetootell@gmail.com