

DENBIGH AND DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

Feedback from the meeting on 5/12/22

This is for those amazingly few members who were unable to attend for one reason or another and, possibly, also for those who could not hear or cannot (like me!) remember what went on.

I shall write it now, in case you don't make it to the end ... Merry Christmas and all the very best for 2023.

As this was my first meeting as President, I took a leaf out of Julia's book and wrote a script for myself, which I more or less followed on the day, and I now replicate for your delectation. This is followed by a copy of Keith's draft for next year's programme and then Julia's synopsis of our most excellent talk by Zara Fleming.

So, after much banging of the gavel I said (more or less):-

Welcome all. Croeso.

What a turnout! – over 30 Members out of 37.

By the way ... for those Members here today, who couldn't attend the AGM last month I'm not Julia on a very, very bad day – I am your new President – and I must say I really appreciate such an amazing welcome.

Some may suppose this tremendous turnout is due to it being the Christmas Lunch and our esteemed guest speaker.

Well, ... that might be true ... and it would certainly explain why we have so many guests! ... more than 20!

You are all most welcome, but I'm afraid there are just too many guests for me to name you all.

And Zara Fleming who is our speaker – of whom more later.

We have apologies from three Members ... also two who are both in hospital, I believe – we wish them both a speedy recovery.

We will now have an “offering of thanks”:

May we give thanks for this our food
For life and health and every good
We are more fortunate than we deserve
So let's live less for self and more for all.

There's one last thing that I ought to mention ... if only I could remember what it is!

Oh yes!!! CHRISTMAS.

It seems now would be a good time to let your hair down (apologies to those who don't have any!!) and pull the crackers.

Thank you

Please enjoy your lunch and conversation.

MEAL

TOAST TO THE KING

Please be upstanding, if you are able, for the toast to the King.

REMARKS

I trust you all enjoyed your lunch – I certainly did. So please join me in thanking the hotel staff for doing such a good job.

Applause

Talking of a good job well done, we all owe Steve Tootell a great big thanks for getting this all organised - numbers, name tags, place names, meal choices ... and who knows what else. And then all the changes too. We mentioned John Knowles and Neville Pratt earlier as being unwell – I'm just grateful we haven't had to add Steve to that, thankfully, short list ... due to a case of apoplexy.

We must also thank Steve for representing the Club at the Remembrance Day service in Denbigh and laying a wreath for us.

Many, many thanks Steve.

{Thanks are also due to Steve for the pottery bowls he so generously provided for all present and the group photographs he has produced.}

Applause

So ... Birthdays, this month we have five - I hope I haven't missed anyone?
HAPPY BIRTHDAY to you all.

Toast Happy Birthday.

Updates from committee

Right – this is the boring bit – Club business. I'll keep it as short as I can.

Firstly, may I remind you that annual subs of £20 are due in January when the

lunch will also cost £20 – so no change!!! 😊

At the AGM, Bob Jones should have been proposed as a Committee Member, but due to my oversight, this didn't happen. However, he has now been co-opted into the Committee as a Member without Portfolio. Welcome Bob.

Our new Membership, Business and Media Officers have been taking up the reins from Keith.

And Keith soldiers on looking after the Programme for 2023 – not being helped by the announcement of the King's Coronation bank holiday. It clashes with our May meeting date which, therefore, has had to be postponed. And one of the other speakers appears to have got lost in the dark.

Anyway, Keith has produced a very interesting programme for next year and draft copies are on the table for you to peruse and take away if you wish. *{see below}* Members will get copies once the programme is finalised.

Keith has been working hard on this programme and has accumulated enough potential speakers to do 2024's as well – BUT ... he is very keen to step aside from this role, and we are STILL looking for a replacement.

Talking of which ... we are also STILL seeking a Vice President.

Now, we'll have a 10 minute break and after we return, we can sit back, relax and enjoy an entertaining discourse from Zara on "Bhutan – Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon".

BREAK

Welcome back

{Zara didn't give me the opportunity to give a proper intro!}

Zara Fleming and "Bhutan – Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon".

SPEAKER

Questions

I call upon ----- to give a Vote of Thanks.

TOAST TO THE CLUB

Please be upstanding, if you are able, for the toast to the Denbigh and District Probus Club.

That's all folks – see you next month – 9th of January, when our speaker will be Rod Waterfield talking about the Woodland Skills Centre.

Draft Programme for 2023:

Programme for 2023		
9 January	Rod Waterfield	Woodland Skills Centre
6 February	Ian Glass	Classic Car Touring & Rallying
6 March	Mark Wilson	Principality Building Society; fraud and scam awareness
3 April	Mary Steel	WW2 Guernsey Girls evacuation to Denbigh
15 May	Jane Moore	History of National Garden Scheme
5 June	Vicky MacDonald	Building the Mulberry Harbours
3 July	No speaker	
1 August	No Speaker	
4 September	Meirick Lloyd Davies	Work of the Denbighshire County Council
2 October	TBA	Dark Skies
6 November	No speaker	AGM
4 December	Gareth Foulkes	Modern old-fashioned farming

{Note: All names have been removed except for those of prominent Committee Members and Speakers.}

Bhutan – Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon

Members of the Denbigh and District Probus Club and their guests enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch at the Oriel Hotel in St Asaph this month.

New Club President John Barr from St Asaph, who took on the role in November 2022 at the club AGM, following on from Julia Hughes, the 2022 Club President, led the proceedings and welcomed the speaker Zara Fleming who gave a fascinating talk on Bhutan – Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon.

Zara Fleming, who lives in Denbighshire, is an independent art consultant, lecturer, tour guide and exhibition curator with specialist knowledge of Buddhist art; focusing on the art and culture of Tibet and the Himalayas.

Her interest in the country stemmed from when she was aged 7 and the Dalai Lama came out of Tibet and her school raised money. She decided that one day she would go there. Having been left a small legacy for travel by a relative when she was 21, she left and worked in a school in Tibet.

Her lecturing experience includes the Arts Society (formerly NADFAS), the School of African and Oriental Studies, the V & A, Merseyside County Museums, the Oriental Museum in Durham, the Royal Academy, the Brunei Gallery, Asia House and to schools, universities and various study groups. She has also lectured in Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

She was initially based at the Victoria & Albert Museum, with general responsibility for the Tibetan, Himalayan and Burmese Collections (1974-81); Zara was then affiliated with the Central Asian Department at Bonn University cataloguing the Tibetan and Mongolian collections of all UK Museums and private collections, part of a larger cataloguing project throughout Europe (1981-88) and was the Assistant Projects Director in Europe for the Orient Foundation (1984-5).

She has curated several exhibitions including “Man and Environment in Harmony” for Vistech International, London (1992), “In the Steppes of Genghis Khan” at the October Gallery in London, 2003; “Asia – Body, Mind, Spirit” for the Wellcome Library and Asia House, 2004 and “The Tiger in Asian Art” at Asia House, 2010. And prepared the educational material for the “Sacred Art of Tibet – Wisdom and Compassion” exhibition at the Royal Academy in London (1992). She is also an art consultant and Curatorial Advisor.

Zara explained that **Bhutan** means at the end of Tibet and that 60 years ago there were no roads, no cars and no currency (textiles used to be used as currency) and that it is a tiny country between Tibet and India about the size of Switzerland but with a population of 800,000 vs 8 million in Switzerland.

There are 23 languages spoken in the country but English is the main medium. The people are collectively known as the dragon people.

Bhutan has always lived in harmony with the environment and it is believed that people must eliminate suffering and get rid of ignorance, greed and anger to gain enlightenment.

There was no art in the country until the late 20th century apart from religious art and all paintings and sculptures have to be consecrated. Any paintings have to follow the same format e.g., have only things in them found in Bhutan.

Right around the Buddhist world are Chorten (including Bhutan) Buddhist shrines, typically a saint's tomb or a monument to the Buddha. They represent enlightenment and people need to go around them in a clockwise direction.

There are also many Dzongs which are a bit like a Welsh castle but with a castle, cathedral and county council rolled into one and they are very much in use today, however, because they burn butter lamps on the alter, many have been destroyed by fire.

There is a code of conduct for dress in the country and they wear the Gho the traditional and national dress for men. It is a robe tied with a handwoven belt with different lengths worn depending on status. There is also a ceremonial shawl again linked to status with different colours for different categories of people.

Women wear the Kira which is an ankle-length dress consisting of a rectangular piece of woven fabric. It is wrapped and folded around the body.

Zara also gave a detailed account of the history of the royalty in the country including King Jigme Sinye Wangchuck who took office on July 24, 1972, a few months before the death of his father, who had abdicated and handed power to his son. Jigme Singye Wangchuk was crowned King of Bhutan at age 18, making him the youngest monarch and leader in the world at that time.

He made everyone wear costume, use the same language and had 4 wives and 10 children.

He concentrated on sustainable economic growth and development, good governance, conservation and sustainable environment insisting that 60% of the land must be national forest, no pesticides, no fertilizer and no tobacco. He wanted preservation and promotion of agricultural heritage.

The schools in the country focused on 13 crafts including slate carving, clay sculptures, appliqué banners, weaving and dancing. He reigned until 2006.

The government of Bhutan has been a constitutional monarchy since 2008. The King is the head of state and there is a council of ministers and Prime Minister (who is a doctor at weekends). There is a free health service.

Travellers to the county must be in groups – 2 people minimum. It is really a beautiful and interesting place to visit.

<https://www.tourism.gov.bt/>.

Denbigh and District Probus Club welcomes new members to join our group for monthly meetings (held at the Oriel Hotel, St Asaph) where we enjoy lunch, friendship and a stimulating guest speaker. The next meeting will be on Monday January 9th 2022 when Rod Waterfield will speak about The Woodland Skills Centre, which is in Bodfari.

For further information contact Gareth Williams, Membership Officer, julmwilliams1974@gmail.com or call 07881 783735