

## **Back to the 1950's for Denbigh and District Probus Club!!**

Members of the Denbigh and District Probus Club and their guests enjoyed a wonderful lunch at the Oriel Hotel, St Asaph at their meeting in March. The speaker after lunch was Tony Griffiths who is a notable local documentary filmmaker who also has a photography, picture framing and portrait studio business and shop in Bridge St. Denbigh. <https://tonygriffithsphotography.uk/>

Tony has been involved in photography for over 20 years and is skilled in all aspects of the media, including monochrome and colour work. His work has been exhibited in various venues in Wales including Prestatyn Library, Rhyl Arts Centre, Oriel Eryri, Penrhyn Castle and Southport Arts Centre.

Tony was a headteacher for 17 years before retirement and he set up his business and shop which has now been open for 15 years, soon after that. 10 years ago, he started making films (short movie documentaries) with the support of good friends and local volunteers. Under the name North Wales Film Makers, 8 films have been made with the first one covering the story of the Abergele rail disaster of 1868. All films are made without budget/external funds.

Other films include The Fate of the Irish Mail; Cai Dai 1950's Museum; Images of North Wales; Bernard Willems, War Survivor-Artist Extraordinaire, Prestatyn and Meliden's Heritage; Pobl Hanesyddol Dinbych- No Mean Town and more. All films are engaging, detailed and of great interest and include an amusing outtakes section at the conclusion after the credits!

Following details from Tony about his background and the film making activities, members were treated to a viewing of the 45-minute film - Cai Dai 1950's Museum, featuring the owner of the museum Sparrow Harrison (who was originally a mechanic) together with a narrator and local Denbigh volunteers acting in costumes of the time.

The 1950s museum which was re-stocked and rebuilt following a dreadful fire in 2009, houses collections which are not behind glass but accessible for all - visitors can pick things up. Collections include classic cars, sport, music, film, crime memorabilia including the Great Train Robbery getaway vehicle. Some of the artefacts date back to the 1960s and 1940s as well but it is mostly an immersion into life in the 1950s that is on offer with items ranging from a pink Cadillac to a wall to floor collection of old cigarette cartons and smoking memorabilia. The museum takes people on a journey back in time.

Most of the motor exhibits were tragically lost in the fire, but the museum rose from the ashes because of donations from businesses and members of the public.

The museum, just 1 mile outside the market town of Denbigh, runs alongside The Cae Dai Trust. After the closure of North West Wales' largest psychiatric hospital in 1994, the Cae Dai Trust was founded to help those with mental health problems and vulnerabilities.

The film, with background music and tracks of the time, highlighted several interesting facts including that at the end of the 1950's, there were still only 367 supermarkets in the whole of Great Britain, how games and jigsaws were traditional pastimes and hobbies of the 50's and lounge bars were a traditional luxury item for people's homes often with Babycham being served!!

It also took the Probus members to the hairdressers, a Punch and Judy show, and highlighted the number of cinemas around in the 50's and how they played an important part in the lives of both children and adults. Smoking pipes and cigarettes was widespread then and crime was rare in 50's Britain.

There was a focus on the music of the time with Sparrow the lead singer in a rhythm and blues band "Sparrow and the Gossamers" playing in central London in 1954, meeting PJ Proby, the Rolling Stones in attendance and Alexis Korner substituting for their guitarist when he was not available for a gig. Sparrow was also a friend of the late John Peel – they attended the same school in Deganwy, Conwy.

Sparrow later got involved in boxing and became good friends with the Kray twins and Bruce Reynolds, the mastermind behind the Great Train Robbery in 1963. Due to his disability in stammering, Sparrow founded the British Stammering Association in 1978. In 2015, Sparrow was awarded the MBE by the Queen for his charity work.  
<https://www.facebook.com/1950smuseum/>

The film finished off with an hilarious collection of outtakes which really highlighted the time and effort that goes into making films to get the required end product!

The next Denbigh and District Probus Club meeting will be an invitational lunch on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April when Brian Gresty will give a talk titled "Iron Mad Jack aka John Wilkinson". Following that the meeting on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May will be "We've got you framed – speaker Chanel Jones.

New members are always warmly welcomed.

For further information have a look at the club web site [denbighprobus.com](http://denbighprobus.com) or contact the Membership Officer Andrew Faulkner for more details prior to an introductory visit to a Probus meeting.

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