

From Vancouver to Toronto

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 February. The speaker after lunch was Rufus Adams from Rhyl.

Rufus graduated with Honours in History from the University of Wales, Swansea, and studied for his Diploma in Education in Bangor. One of his history professors in Swansea told him that if you study history, you will have a rich mind and a light wallet!!

Rufus spent the whole of his career in adult education. He was a history tutor at Coleg Harlech, WEA Tutor Organiser for (old) Flintshire and from 1980-96 Director of WEA North Wales. He founded and edited the magazine "Silyn" and has published extensively on adult education and David Lloyd George. He was the consultant (Wales) for Nottingham University's International Biography of Adult Education and was the Welsh representative for the British Pre-Retirement Education Committee.

Rufus is very interested in opera and music and has been a member of Welsh National Opera's Management Committee and Chairman and later President of the North Wales Friends of WNO.

Rufus spoke about a wonderful trip he and his late wife took to Canada in August 2003 following an invitation from the secretary of the North American Festival of Wales, to give two lectures on the life of David Lloyd George.

The festival had four strands which included North American Welsh Eisteddfod where there was an evening concert with the folk group Mabon and Dunvant Male Voice Choir conducted by Tim Rhys-Evans with soloist Jason Howard. (Dunvant is a small village situated some five miles west of Swansea on the South coast of Wales.)

There was also a Welsh learners' event as well as a number of lectures including Tracing your Welsh Ancestors, Dylan Thomas in America, the Welsh Economy, Diamonds of the North and the lectures from Rufus on the young David Lloyd George and David Lloyd George's astonishing career.

After delivering his first lecture, one of the attendees shared the information that his father buried David Lloyd George, and invited Rufus and his wife to travel on to Toronto following the festival to visit and have lunch with him and his family.

The last day of the festival was the ceremony of flowers where a deep red rose was given to relatives of each person who was a member of the society who had died during that year. They were distributed by the youngest member attending the festival aged 10 and the oldest aged 90.

Rufus outlined his stay in Vancouver to members including his trips to many beautiful places, a coach trip on Highway 99 and a lunch with David Williams a professor at Vancouver University who was originally from Prestatyn.

He then told everyone about his wonderful journey on the way to Toronto on the train – the Rocky Mountaineer which took two days, (<https://www.rockymountaineer.com/>) seeing the sights by day and sleeping in a hotel at night. The journey from Vancouver to Calgary was 750 miles and he described the trip as a scenic wonder, spotting salmon, eagles, ospreys and bears as well as skirting the 5 lakes. Lake Superior itself is about 3 times bigger than Wales!

To give Probus members an idea of the vast country that is Canada, he provided comparisons – the population is approximately 40 million currently vs 3.3 million in Wales. Canada is the world's second-largest country after Russia, stretching across 3.8 million square miles which means the UK could fit into Canada over 40 times. There are six time zones in Canada.

He visited Thunder Bay where his wife's family had lived until they left Canada in 1921 and where she still had some relatives living. They visited the Terry Fox memorial which is a nine-foot-tall bronze stature to remember a young man who at eighteen years of age lost his leg to bone cancer. During his time at the hospital, he was overwhelmed by the other cancer patients' suffering and vowed to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research. He started the Marathon of Hope in 1980 in St. John's Newfoundland. He ran about 26 miles (42 kms) every day until reaching just outside Thunder Bay, after 143 days, when cancer had reappeared in his lungs. Sadly, he succumbed to the disease on June 28, 1981 at the young age of 22. This Canadian hero's legacy lives on with an annual Terry Fox Run held in over 60 countries that has raised millions for cancer research.

From Thunder Bay, they flew to Toronto where they went to see a hockey match, Niagara Falls and a Mennonites community. (Mennonites are a group of Anabaptist denominations based on the teachings and tradition of Menno Simons.)

Their journey had ended and they flew back to Wales from Toronto having spotted Concorde at the airport before take-off. Rufus reflected that it had been an

absolutely wonderful trip which they would never forget, however “the sweetest journey is the journey home!”

“Y Siwrnai melysa yw’r siwrnai adre!”

The talk has inspired many Probus members to research Canada further and maybe consider travelling there in the future!

The next Denbigh and District Probus Club meeting will be on Monday 4th March when Tony Griffiths’ talk is ‘Back to the 1950’s’. The following meeting will be an invitational lunch on Monday 8th April when Brian Gresty will give a talk titled “Iron Mad Jack aka John Wilkinson”

New members are always warmly welcomed.

For further information have a look at the club web site 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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