

Blood Bikes Wales

Members of the Denbigh and District Probus Club enjoyed another wonderful lunch at the Oriel Hotel, St Asaph at their meeting on Monday 2nd September. The speaker after lunch was Phil Hackney (assisted by his colleague Paul) who gave a talk about Blood Bikes Wales. Phil is a volunteer with Blood Bikes and carries out the roles of blood biker, controller, and fundraiser.

In 1962 the Emergency Volunteer Service (EVS) was formed and additional rapid response motorcycle charities set up from motorcycle riders' groups and clubs. By 2008, the National Association of Blood Bikes was developed followed by the formation of Blood Bikes Wales (BBW) in 2011. By 2015 a Wrexham group was formed which went live in April 2016. Due to logistics, demand, rider locations and in response to the Covid pandemic, Wrexham Coastal group was developed and started work in 2019 (affectionately known as "The Beach Boys!").

Blood Bikes Wales is a 100% volunteer charity based in Wales, (a member of the Nationwide Association of Blood Bikes), providing a completely free courier service to the NHS, delivering blood samples, plasma, blood for transfusions, donated human milk, documents and other items all over Wales.

Donated human milk is frozen and held in national milk banks which is relayed by Blood Bikes in special boxes to premature baby units around Wales to give new born babies a fighting chance.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the demand for the services of Blood Bikes Wales increased by over 300%, transporting testing kits and samples everywhere. During the pandemic, BP (British Petroleum) gave Blood Bikes free fuel to carry out their work.

A new critical service is currently being introduced transporting blood samples to a special Sepsis Hub for immediate ongoing diagnosis and appropriate treatments. The risk of dying from sepsis increases by as much as 8% for every hour of delayed treatment. On average, approximately 30% of patients diagnosed with severe sepsis do not survive. This sepsis work will increase and Blood Bikes will probably have to step up their service to respond.

The organisation supports the National Health Service working with six NHS trusts in Wales and the courier service is free of charge and operates on weekdays for some health board areas and across Wales from 7pm on Friday evening until midnight on Monday morning including bank holidays & even Christmas Day! There is rarely a job turned down apart from when the temperature is below 0 degrees centigrade.

The volunteers are drawn from anyone who can give up their time to help with the roles of fundraisers, controllers, riders, trainers, assessors, administrators, trustees, and IT specialists.

All riders must achieve the Advanced Riders Qualification and have 3 yearly assessments and they also have training on handling items to be carried as bikes are fitted with a top box and panniers and specimen boxes. Riders provide their own riding kit.

The controllers when on duty, are responsible for all the blood bikes on all the roads in Wales looking after the whole of the service when on shift, always monitoring riders' progress for safety and coordinating pick up and the drop off of items including relay journeys and rider to rider handovers across the length and breadth of Wales. There is a paper trail for everything and comprehensive record keeping.

There are currently 3 bikes in service in N Wales – 2 based in Wrexham and 1 based at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. Some of the current and past bikes have been funded by generous donations from the families of people who have passed away, some in tragic or difficult circumstances and accidents.

Bikes are retired just before 3 years – 70,000 miles approximately before repair costs escalate, before a first MOT, before expiration of warranty and when they know there will still be a good second-hand value that can be re-invested towards a new bike. Tyres need to be changed every 6000-7000 miles – bikes are used 7 days a week and regular servicing costs are £470+ each time.

A blood motorbike can get through traffic quicker and more easily than taxis or other vehicles even though in N Wales they do not use blue lights or sirens.

Blood Bikes and all the volunteers provide a brilliant free service to the NHS and their contributions can't be underestimated.

For more information on Blood bikes Wales or to contact them to volunteer or donate, e-mail on enquiries@bloodbikes.wales www.bloodbikes.wales or phone 0845 646 0800

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