

## **Visiting the Victory – Denbigh and District Probus Club**

Members and guests of the Denbigh and District Probus Club enjoyed their December invitation meeting with a wonderful Christmas meal at Tweedmill, St Asaph, followed by a talk titled **Visiting the Victory** presented by club member **Michael Corfe**.

Michael was a project planner (in public Highways design) of the thirty-year design period before any road went into production. This entailed interviewing many different disciplines such as all the statutory undertakers, gas, telephone, water, sewage, bridge and tunnel designers, road designer engineers, soils and land engineers and the County Secretariat for all Public Consultations. All this was done using Critical Path illustrations of logic.

When he retired from professional life, he was able to further his interest in history and had more time to research. He has around 17 different talks which he delivers and has raised a great deal of money to donate to many human charities.

The talk took members and guests on an historical tour of the Great Victory one of Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson's ships which was launched in 1765.

It was a period of press ganging the coercive and often violent practice of forcing men into military service, mainly for the British Royal Navy during the Age of Sail (17th-19th centuries). Eligible men would be seized, usually merchant sailors but sometimes labourers, from ports or ships, offering little choice due to harsh naval conditions and high wartime demand.

There were terrible conditions aboard ships during that period and treatment included floggings (with a maximum of 36 lashes with a cat-o'-nine-tails, a multi tailed whip, on any one ship), keel-hauling, short rations, as well as low wages. This often led to mutiny on board ships and deaths because of clashes on the ships.

Michael described the wonderful conditions and facilities enjoyed by Nelson in contrast with the living and sleeping conditions of the sailors and outlined the medical treatments in this pre-anaesthetic period.

The diets of the sailors were poor with stewed salt beef, pork or sometimes fish, oatmeal, dried peas, supper biscuits with butter of cheese which was often rancid. Water was often really poor and contaminated so rations of alcohol were given out instead.

The scale of the ship was outlined with 27 miles of rope on board, 88 tonnes of mast yardarms and booms, 4 acres of sails making up the 37 separate sails and 104 cannons. It took 120 men to operate the enormous anchor.

The complicated love life of Nelson was also highlighted which included his long-suffering wife Frances Herbert Nelson (was Woolward) known as Fanny and his lover Lady Emma Hamilton a celebrated model, dancer, and actress.

Nelson died in 1805 aged 47 having been shot by a French sniper during the battle of Trafalgar. His funeral saw 100's of ships sailing up the Thames accompanying his coffin which was being taken up to Greenwich ready for burial in St Paul's Cathedral the following day.

A memorial column, funded by public subscription was erected in 1846 in Trafalgar Square in London as a lasting memorial to Nelson.

The next Denbigh and District Probus Club meeting will be on **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at Tweedmill in St Asaph**, when the speaker will be **Andy Dunbobb**in who will give a talk about the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

**Denbigh and District Probus Club** is a group of business or professional **women and men** either approaching or enjoying retirement or semi-retirement.

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](http://denbighprobus.com) or contact [stevetootell@gmail.com](mailto:stevetootell@gmail.com)