

# Denbigh and District Probus Club – precis of meeting - 9/1/23

Remarks by John Barr, President

I welcomed all and passed on Season's Greetings.

The Club congratulated one of our Members, on receiving an MBE in the New Year Honours List for political and public service in St Asaph.

I highlighted the excellent turnout – 34 - with 30 Members out of 38 and then drew attention, in particular to:-

- our latest Member.
- 1 Member's guest.
- 2 Club guests – Prospective Members
- And our speaker – Rod Waterfield.

We had apologies from one Member ... Plus three others with various health issues.

Then we mentioned a recent new Member – who only joined us late last year. He has told us that due to his ongoing health issues he feels unable to take up membership.

And last – but certainly not least – news of an elderly Member. Steve found him very hard to track down, but, we now understand that he is in hospital after a fall. So we all, I'm sure, wish him well.

I then gave an “offering of thanks”

*We give thanks for our food*

*For our work, play, fun and all that is good*

*For wind, rain and sun and all that our world requires*

*But most of all, we give thanks for those we know and love.*

We then had our lunch of chilli con carne followed by delicious apple pie and cream. Then after the Toast to the King I continued.

I thanked Steve Tootell for getting this all organised - numbers, lanyards, place names ... and who knows what else. And then all the chasing up he has to do. And the Club showed it's appreciation.

Then we were into Birthdays – of which there are two and they were both toasted.

And we moved on to Club Business.

The first item being for new our latest Member –to give us a brief introduction to herself.

After which she and another recent new Member received their pin badges.

We then moved on to items of Club Business.

1 Most importantly, we are also STILL seeking a Vice President. All of you, please, think “Why not me? If John can do it – surely, I can?”. Please remember, to misquote a famous phrase, ... “The Club expects every Member to do their duty”.

And while in haranguing mode ...

2 You know, it really isn't fair on Steve Tootell, our hard-working Luncheon Officer, that he has to chase people up to find out if they are coming to lunch or not. It's not as if we don't all know in advance when the meeting is going to be. So, from now on we are going to operate as follows:

Any Member who does not respond to Steve's invitation by the deadline he has given will be assumed to NOT be attending.

I pointed out that, apart from simply responding to his email, there are obviously numerous ways to let Steve know your intention – tell Steve today you *can't/will* come next month, phone him, text him, email him, send a carrier pigeon .... . Forethought and communication are the keys.

3 I then sought a volunteer to help our Finance Officer to collect the money at next month's meeting. .... was kind enough to volunteer.

Next month we'll seek a volunteer for March and so on.

4 Steve's inability to find out what was happening to our elderly Member has given the Committee some food for thought and I sought the Member's collective view on this. Should the Club keep a back-up contact for each member? Preferably a phone number, for somebody close who will only be contacted if all else fails? These numbers would not appear on the membership list but, I suggested, should be held by two Committee Members.

There was a consensus that this was a good idea, so we shall be instigating that soon.

5 This generated a brief discussion on GDPR and the Club's compliance. Members should know that the Committee is already looking into this and updates are imminent.

6 Members were then informed that the hotel has notified the Club of a price increase for the lunches of £1 to £19.50 commencing in March. The Committee increased the lunch price to Members to £20 at the AGM anticipating a cost increase. Therefore, the price to Members will remain at £20 at present.

7 Keith Lester has prepared copies of the 2023 Programme and these were distributed to Members for their own use and for passing on to interested parties.

We were then fascinated by the talk given by Rod Waterfield – see Julia's synopsis.

After a number of interesting questions ..... gave a Vote of Thanks.

The meeting was closed with the toast to the Denbigh and District Probus Club.

Next meeting – 6<sup>th</sup> Feb, with speaker Ian Glass, talking about car rallying and touring.

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

## Woodland Skills Centre Talk for Denbigh and District Club

Members of the Denbigh and District Probus Club were delighted to welcome Rod Waterfield from The Woodland Skills Centre, Bodfari, Denbighshire as the speaker for their first meeting of 2023 which was held at the Oriel Hotel in St Asaph.

Rod had been teaching for 35 years with his final 25 years in senior management as Deputy-Head and Head of community comprehensives.

He bought 50 acres of woodland and grazing land near Bodfari, in the heart of the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, took early retirement and set about seeing how the land could be used and developed in the light of his life-long interests in: people, the natural environment, and the interface between the two. The Woodlands Skills Centre was established 25 years ago.

The management objectives for the woodland and the centre are: social - with the land to be enjoyed by as many people as possible, environmental - trying to ensure that every species that could be expected to live in such an environment in that part of Wales is there and thriving and sustainable – economic, a working woodland that pays its way.

The site in the Wheeler Valley is on post glacial sand with very little surface water and so 4 ponds have been established over the years which have attracted a variety of native reptile species. Rod also explained how, when he first took over the woodlands, there were 7 native species of trees and now there are 28.

There is a commitment to preserve heritage crafts, running a variety of courses every year to pass on these valuable skills. There are 83 courses on offer during 2023 under the categories basket making and willow work, bushcraft, greenwood and coppice crafts, traditional crafts, woodland and countryside management, training courses and creative crafts.

The centre has won many awards including Best Community Woodland in Wales from the RWAS and Best Centre For Learning Traditional Craft from The Observer Magazine.

Traditional building techniques have been used for all of the buildings constructed at the centre using local materials wherever possible with the newest building being timber framed, having modern technology, Pilkington K glass, 150mm sheep's wool insulation, lime plaster, wood burner, a roof section which is 43 degrees from horizontal to get maximum solar gain from the photo-voltaic roof panels and many other sustainable features.

There is a mission to actively engage with people who do not generally come on the craft courses and this includes a social prescribing programme and work with adults with complex needs and their families with projects and activities that put benefit back into the local communities e.g., the wildflower project – growing them for Denbighshire County Council, allotments, heritage orchard etc.

There are also extensive programmes linked with education and youngsters who can't cope in school and projects and programmes in partnership with Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn (the regional centre for autism education in North Wales).

The Woodland Skills Centre is owned by Warren Woods Ltd; a community-owned, not-for-profit Social Enterprise company and the site currently supports 11 full time equivalent jobs.

Club members were amazed at the centre and the developments and projects that have taken place, are on-going and planned and at the massive amount of hard work and commitment from Rod, his family and staff in ensuring that the centre is a really valuable, successful and sustainable community resource.

Probus members plan to visit the centre in the future to see and experience some of the activities and projects first hand.

Denbigh and District Probus Club welcomes new members to join their group for monthly meetings (held at the Oriel Hotel, St Asaph) where they enjoy lunch, friendship and a talk from a guest speaker. For further information contact -

Membership Officer .....

The speaker at the next club meeting on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February will be Ian Glass who will talk about Classic car rallying and touring.