

DISTILLATIONS

December 2006

Dear Member,

The members of the DC Retirees' Association Committee hope that you will enjoy the new format of the newsletter. I would like to thank all the contributors to this issue of Distillations. Please send any comments or articles to me at the address on the last page

Val Caple (Membership Secretary)

RETIREES LLANDUDNO HOLIDAY MAY 1st - 5th 2006

Yesterday we returned from our mini holiday with our retirees to Llandudno. The weather was kind to us as we travelled on the Bank Holiday Monday, the traffic being light. Cardiff, Hereford, (where we stopped for lunch) amid some beautiful flower displays) Wrexham Chester, and passing Hawarden (my old R.A.F. camp prior to me going to Lunenburg) and Broughton where they make the wings for the Airbus planes. Fantastic views of the River Dee Estuary as we went along the A55 towards Colwyn Bay and to Llandudno. we noted the sign for Bodelwyddan Castle just branching off the main road; The Grand Hotel nestles beneath the Great Orme and was worth its name as it has just been renovated. The food was of high quality and the menu varied each day to satisfy most tastes. Besides normal paying guests there were four lots of coach parties two were National Coaches, one was ours (Edwards) and the other was from West Yorkshire, Ross Coaches. We did a run next day to Caernarfon (which was windy) to look at the Castle (Where Charles was presented to the people of Wales at the Investiture) then over the Britannia Bridge to Llanfairpwllgwyllgogerychwyndrobwillantysiliogogogoch for a short lunch stop and shopping at Pringles.

We then carried on to Beaumaris Castle only for a run around as there is nothing there to be honest, but the view from there back across to the Snowden Mountain range was quite an eyeful on a clear sunny day. We came back over the Menai Straight Bridge which was very narrow and the coach had only about an inch either side judging by his wing mirrors. The next day was a trip to Porthmadog via Betws y Coed to Blaenau Ffestiniog along the A470. (Did you know that the A470 runs from Llandudno to Cardiff? It must be the longest trunk road in Wales). The stop at Blaenau Ffestiniog was for the Llechedd Slate Quarries and mines, for a short rail trip inside to see the slate seams, and the conditions that people had to work under.



Llechedd Slate Mine



Great Orme Railway

From here we boarded the steam train that winds down the valley to Boston Lodge and the Cob and over the estuary to Porthmadog, again the weather was brilliant and the scenery breathtaking. The next day was a day in the resort of Llandudno, take a trip up the Great Orme by tram or cable car, last minute shopping, a stroll along the pier or promenade. On the day of departure (09.15) we travelled back the same route but stopped at Ludlow a beautiful market town with shops of good quality bakers and butchers, in old mock Tudor houses. The local market was in full swing with high quality vegetables and flowers and the usual mixture of mixed goods, it was then time for lunch. It was only a two hour run back from here and we arrived back home at 16.30 hrs. You might

wonder why we did not travel along the A470 to Llandudno from Cardiff—well it is alright for a scenic car run, but it is not suitable for coaches.

It is at this point that a vote of thanks must be in order to Mary Currie who did a lot behind the scenes as Brenda and Bert could not be with us. Mary even had time to organise a quiz, and a raffle on board and helped to sort out a few minor problems that arose at the hotel.

Brian Rich., Photos by Mary Currie

The Ghost of Dowdeswell Court

I think the year was 1963. I was working in the Cost dept., in 'The New Dock Hotel' building, where the Accounts department of those days was located. For some reason, I was selected (i.e. detailed off) to attend a one-week's residential 'staff training course', to be held at Dowdeswell Court. To start the name-dropping and revive memories – Keith Harrhy (Personnel) was the organiser of these events. Tom Marsh was the Chief Accountant – my boss.

Dowdeswell Court is an old elegant country house, situated in the village of Lower Dowdeswell, in the Cotswolds, not far from Cheltenham. (It was then used as a training college, has been many things since, and has now been restored as a 'country residence').

Keith had briefed some of us on the amenities in the area for any spare time that would be available (i.e. there was a very good pub not far away – I 'm sure it was at Withington.) Also, the church at Dowdeswell was full of history.

I don't recall too much of the studies we undertook - the reason for going to Dowdeswell Court. I think they included playing business games, though maybe I'm confusing that course with others I've attended since, elsewhere.

However, during our introductions at the start of the course, we were told something of the history of Dowdeswell Court, including the rumour that it was haunted. I think the ghost was of a pregnant young woman, murdered by her lover.

The week passed and a group of us found time to visit the church, which was very interesting.

But the culmination was to be our last night. We remembered the directions to the pub described by Keith Harrhy and I drove there with one 'group'. I assure you that it's only the passing years (not the wines) that have obscured the names of those in the group – there were five of us – but I do recall that Jack Ayres sat in the back of the car.

The pub was everything that Keith Harrhy had promised. Olde-worlde, dim lights and a bevy of attractive young ladies. (Were they from the Cheltenham Ladies College, of renown ?)

It matters not. We had our fill of ale and left in high spirits for Dowdeswell Court and to bed. Well, nearly, but not quite!.

I should have mentioned that accommodation was shared – two of us to a room. I shared with Geoff Benton. Almost opposite our room was one occupied by Graham Cooper and Tom Kendrick. I don't recall the number, but it was their room that was said to be haunted.

I persuaded Geoff that this was a good time to revive the Ghost of Dowdeswell, and visit Graham and Tom. I stuffed a pillow from my bed against my stomach and secured it with a white sheet, also over my head, – to appear pregnant. We went quietly (we thought) across the corridor and knocked on the door to Graham and Tom's room with suitable high pitched wailings. Graham's voice called out "Just a minute, just a minute" and we waited for the door to open. Surely enough it did, but the first thing that came through it was a container full of cold water. My 'pregnancy' terminated then, with howls of laughter from the four of us.

Not everybody was pleased – there were groans at breakfast the next morning about having been kept awake.

What did we learn on the course? Mainly, I suppose, that we were all people from different disciplines, but who found we could get on well together.

Angus Crockett

E-mail from Tom K

Angus, I do remember Dowdeswell Court. Graham and I were sharing a room which was reputed to be haunted. Some of the wags from Barry, you included I believe and wearing a white sheet, came along to our room and started making ghost noises (whatever they are). My natural inclination was to go to the door and have a good laugh with the ghost, but Graham had other ideas. He said "Tom don't open the door yet, do it when I tell you". He then proceeded to fill a metal waste basket with cold water and after I had opened the door, threw the water over you and your and your co-ghosts. My own feelings were that this was no way to treat a ghost and was I was quite relieved to find out that it was you and the lads from Barry and not the old lady with a shawl who reputed to haunt the room. Beyond this, I cannot remember anything else about the visit. It could be due to time that has elapsed since going to Dowdeswell, the booze consumed at Dowdeswell or a combination of both. It does though demonstrate that life was not all work in those days, we still found ways of relaxing and in so doing, keeping our minds fresh.

Best Regards, Tom

It's S'eneffe to make you cry

I don't work on the Site (in fact some people suggest I don't work at ATE either). One of my pleasures in life is traveling, but unfortunately for some people, I keep coming back. The other day (in March really) came the chance to visit Seneffe, by courtesy of "Goviers Mini Tours", with silicone fluids and rubbers as company.

The driver and I started off on a windy Tuesday morning at 3.45 am, amongst dozens of wild rabbits running around (you would be "wild" too, at that time of the Morning). We motored along the M4 to join the early morning intake into London. We saw the familiar sights, Pakistanis, Japanese, Americans, in fact all races but British, it looks as if we have abandoned our capital city to the tourists. Down the Old Kent Road and on to the M2 to Dover.

Whilst drinking a cup of tea I looked at our freight boat, the "European Trader", tossing up and down in the harbour. I wouldn't say it was that rough, but it's the first time I had seen "white horses" on my cup of tea: The signal was given to proceed on board, and with our unit climbing up the ramp to the boat, I took out my cine camera and filmed our entry. Once on board, we dropped the legs of the trailer, and the clips were snapped on to it and the deck to stop any movement.

My driver had gone to our sleeping berth for a well-earned rest of 5 hours until we docked. I fetched my cine camera and filmed a Russian ship which kept pace with us, then I settled down, drank my brandy and smoked a cigar.

'Zeebrugge', 'Zeebrugge', the voice came over the ship's tannoy - this gave us 20 minutes to get ourselves organised and back into our unit and trailer. The chains were removed, the legs were wound up, and up the ramp we moved. We called into an office for our paperwork, and once past customs clearance we drove off the dock on the right side of the road. It takes only a small amount of time for you to get used to traffic overtaking you on the passenger side, and the only time you have little doubts is when you approach roundabouts, but otherwise you are soon into thinking continental.

I looked at my watch, it was now 2330 hours Central European Time, and we traveled along the motorway towards Seneffe. We stopped at a small town at 0130 hours for a drink, the two glasses of beer came to 88 Belgian francs, nearly £1.25. We traveled on further and passed a very famous place in history, Waterloo, also made famous by the Swedish group ABBA.

The road to Seneffe is covered by a large scrapyard, or so I thought, until daybreak. This is British Leyland European Centre, with at least 80,000 Allegros and Minis, all left hand drive, spread over a vast area of land. We slept in our unit until nearly 0800 hours, when Dow Corning Seneffe Plant opened up. The trailer was backed on to one of the loading bays (there are twelve of them) and we went upstairs to the rest room for a clean up and to drink some hot chocolate, before we met our Belgian friends.

Although I was on holiday and only a passenger, it was soon revealed I was a Dow Corning employee, and was made doubly welcome and invited to have a look around the warehouse. This was arranged for after lunch, and in the meanwhile I was going to film something remarkable a few kilometres away. Nearby is a canal upon which large, barges sail back and fore, but on one stretch they have to be towed uphill for three-quarters of a mile. To explain this simply, it is a large tank of water for containing the barge, running on about 200 wheels up a ramp. Why they didn't use the old lock canal method I don't know - perhaps someone will enlighten me.

'Cora City' is not far from the canal, and it is not a City in that sense, it is a Hypermarket about six times larger than Carrefour in Caerphilly. As you enter this vast building you pass a cinema, a ten pin bowling alley and amusement arcade.

Straight on, then you are in the shopping area selling light fittings, photographic goods, gardening equipment, Hi-Fi and records of every country, shoes and clothes, furniture, D.I.Y. goods, stationery, household goods, jewellery, cut glass, carpets and motor accessories. We then come to the food areas selling bread of all descriptions, wines, cheeses, meats and pates, and the fish area which had a large tank containing crabs, prawns, eels and fish. At the rear of all this was the package food section of cartons, bottles and cans, with 24 check-outs - that is what I call a HYPERMARKET.

Seneffe Warehouse is a purpose-built one, and has no equal in the U.K. The staff there gave me the impression of efficiency and cheerfulness, with an awareness of safety at all times.

We left Seneffe at 1630 hours and made our way back to Zeebrugge, where I bought my duty free 50 cigars at 50 francs for S. (The exchange rate then was 60 francs for £1 sterling). On board the boat I bought a two pint bottle of Courvoisier Brandy at £6.50, and some perfume for my wife. The ship was late sailing and we didn't leave until 0145 hours into a force nine gale again.

After clearing Customs and Immigration, we left Dover at 0700 hours and made our way towards London. We arrived at Heston service station and I managed to film various planes landing at Heathrow every two minutes, Concorde being amongst them. Along the M4, then the Severn Bridge and Cardiff (Wales) Airport, where we dropped the~ trailer for customs check, and I arrived home at 1900 hours on Thursday. This journey taught me many things, and more so how other people have problems and cope, and what I can do to ease those problems.

P.S. Both Barry and Seneffe warehouses use the GLOPICS system - (did you know it stands for: Generally Losing Orders Parcels Invoices Cartons Samples)

Brian Rich, Can you guess the year this was published in the DC magazine?

10 GREAT IDEAS TO KICK START YOUR WALKING YEAR!

- 1. Climb to the Top of Your County.** In the Vale of Glamorgan this is St Hilary Down at 134m, I believe. This can be accessed from A48 (Mogul Emperor Indian) and from St Hilary village via public footpaths.
- 2. Try Walking Poles.** Walking poles spread the load around from your legs onto your arms, so your upper body gets a work out as well as your legs. Takes the load off your knees, up and down hill, as well as on the flat.
- 3. Stretch.** Daily stretching will make your muscles more flexible, helping you to walk better and less susceptible to aches or injury. Stretch after your walk.
- 4. Challenge Yourself.** Walking within your normal range is fine and fun, but you will get a new lease of life from having a go at something a bit harder. Head a bit higher or further and you will get fitter and feel a great sense of achievement.
- 5. Turn your Mobile off.** You can manage for a couple of hours without. Relax.
- 6. Get a lazy Mate to join you.** Invite them to join you and see for themselves what walking is all about. Before long they will be joining you for every walk.
- 7. Distance Hike a Long Path.** See above. It really is one step



after another to a lot of fun and enjoyment.

8. **Stop for the Views.** The next time you stand atop the highest hill for miles around, stay there longer. There is no rush. Linger awhile and soak in the view. In fact stop on the way up (a good excuse for a breather) and on the way down. Treat yourself to a visual feast. Get the camera out and show your friends and family when you get home.
9. **Walk to a Waterfall on a wet day.** Don't let the rain dampen your enthusiasm, but head off to a waterfall to enjoy the white torrent.
10. **Walk it Backwards:** Walk your favourite backwards. Suddenly views and details that you hadn't noticed before become apparent, almost like finding a new route.

(Information extracted from January Country Walking)

Stewart McMillan

'A journey with Norma – it really happened

A few weeks ago, on a Thursday morning, I caught a bus to Cardiff via Penarth to do some shopping. The bus was fairly full and I sat at the rear next to a side window. At the next stop, in Lower Penarth, an elegant, expensively dressed lady, aged in her late 50's, boarded the bus and, in a loud voice which could be heard all over the bus, ordered her ticket from the driver. She came to sit at the rear of the bus sat, next to the window in the seat in front of me. The aroma over expensive perfume was overpowering

When the bus reached Panarth Centre, another smart, but less expensively dressed lady of a similar age, boarded the bus and, while she was purchasing her ticket the lady in front of me bellowed to her 'Joan, come and sit next to me'. Joan did, obviously reluctantly, but said 'Nice to see you again Norma. How is David?'

Then Norma was off at full spate

'When David got his promotion, we needed a lot more space to entertain his business friends and that is why we moved away from your area of Penarth to our new house. David has done very well for us, so now I am able to indulge myself every Thursday by going to Cardiff by bus and then shopping and having a good lunch with a couple of glasses of wine; that is why I am not driving. I finish my day by having a full beauty treatment before returning home on the bus' 'Because we have more space now, David has started collecting antiques and he has a big collection of fine china, silverware, old jewelry and a few original paintings. David is very proud of it although he worries about its safety' At this point Joan managed to get a few words in. 'If we had any antiques in our house, I would be very worried about burglars'

Norma, having collected her breath replied 'Oh, David has taken care of that. He has had a detection system with alarms installed which has movement sensors at each window and door and, also, sensors under rugs as well. It is very simple to use, all the sensors connect back to a little black box behind the front door and, with a key, we can turn the system on or off. The system also allows a certain time for you to get from the front door to the off switch to prevent the alarm going off unnecessarily. It works wonderfully'

Joan commented 'It sounds wonderful but I am getting so forgetful that I would be forever forgetting the key'.

Norma's reply was 'I am forgetful too so David has had a spare front door and alarm keys made and we keep a spare set hidden under a plant pot near the front door'

At this point the bus reached my destination and I got off

I have since wondered if some enterprising person on the bus, who must have heard Norma, followed her back home that day, noted the address and then revisited it on the next Thursday with a van and relieved David of the worry of his antique collection!

Fred Lees

RESIDUES

The Midland Silicones Cricket Team was in the Cardiff & District Midweek league

Back Row, left to right

? ? ? ? ? Milton Eskins

Fred Orchard Alf Butcher

Front Row

? ? ? Fred Saunders ?

Does anyone recognise the others?

Milton Eskins

Please send photographs which would be of interest to other members for inclusion in future issues of Distillations to Val Caple. These could include historic MS or DC photographs or those from recent DC

Retirees' Association Events. Prints or .jpeg files are acceptable, prints and CD's will be returned



MS Cricket Team about 1970