

## DISTILLATIONS

February 2008

*Dear Member,*

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)*

**DCRA on Tour 2007**

We kicked off in January this year with a 5-day break to the Carlton Hotel, Sandown, Isle of Wight and for £99 it was certainly excellent value. Instead of the more usual Southampton ferry we went down through the New Forest and took the ferry from Lymington, a much shorter crossing time. The weather, it must be said, could have been a little kinder however we managed to make several trips to various places of interest – several people even managed to stay upright to view The Needles where it was blowing a gale. The seafront hotel was comfortable and the food very good, the only downside (if you were a light sleeper) was the waves thundering on the shore outside your bedroom. Due to the high winds the ferries were all cancelled the day before we left - however we had a calm crossing on the Friday.

Our next escapade, in April, was to the Holiday Inn Garden Court in Ostend for another 5-day break. The weather couldn't have been better for this one, especially the day we went to Brussels when the temperature hit 91°F (recorded in next day's press as the second hottest city worldwide). For the Brussels trip we had an excellent guide who gave us a very interesting insight into the Belgian way of life and described the many landmarks in and around the city.

Another day was spent either in Bruges or over the border at Sluis in Holland according to choice. Sluis is a pretty little village with lots of interesting shops selling everything you could want and eating/drinking places. It is also known for the abundance of 'sex shops'.

Thursday (market day) was left free for travellers to have a look around the extensive market or stroll along the beach in the sunshine. In the evening we boarded the coach for a visit to Ypres and the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate. This ceremony has been carried out at 8pm every evening (apart from during World War II) by members of the local fire brigade. The road through the gateway is closed off to traffic and crowds stand under the gate to watch the ceremony.

Our first day trip of the year was to Bath when, unfortunately, it poured with rain all day. Bad weather was to dog several of the trips apart from Ostend and Edinburgh! June saw us travel to Weymouth, when again the weather was mixed but it was still an enjoyable day out. Our usual August mystery trip was brought forward to July (due to the Edinburgh trip) and was originally planned for Newquay, West Wales. The weather had been so appalling prior to departure that a contingency plan was in place to visit Aberystwyth instead. As it happened it rained most of the way to Aberystwyth but at least there were plenty of places to shelter had the rain continued, but it did stop long enough for us to enjoy the visit.

One highlight of this year's trips came in August when 43 of us boarded the coach for Scotland. We made a stop en-route at Moffat for refreshments, whisky tasting and retail therapy – we left with half the coaches hold filled with boxes of shortbread (which incidentally was delicious), whisky and woollens. Our hotel in Bathgate (just outside Edinburgh) sort of resembled the brochure pictures, however we think it was printed about 20 years earlier as some of the carpets etc. had seen better days and, although we complained that our room was adorned with cobwebs and the shower was surrounded by mildew, they had no other rooms to offer us. We did fare better than the group from North Wales who arrived late at night and didn't get any dinner – or much breakfast for that matter.

After spending the day sightseeing in Edinburgh (more parcels) we returned to the hotel for an early dinner before returning for the Tattoo. We were warned previously that coaches are not allowed up at the Castle entrance level and we would have to walk up the hill. As it turned out coaches were allowed up the hill and we only had to walk a little way on the flat to reach the Royal Mile. The road was filled with thousands of people making their way into the Castle in a very orderly manner. It was then we discovered that the police had things down to a fine art – they let rows about 10 deep through at a time to the next waiting area, all you had to do to move forward was sing a song and by the time it was finished you were waved through. There was no pushing and shoving, just an orderly good-humoured walk. After passing through security we were finally inside the Castle. I had a mission to find someone to read a dedication for the group – after being directed to several people finally managing to find the actual announcer and, after a bit of grovelling, he took the message. Before the performance began the announcer welcomed visitors from various countries worldwide



*Angus & Mavis enjoying a cooling ice cream in Brussels*

and then read out our dedication and congratulated the Association on its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. (Thank you Dennis for the suggestion). The performance more than lived up to expectations, certainly nothing like the excerpts shown on TV. Once back on the coach our driver announced that the hotel were keeping the bar open late for us – a nice touch.

The following morning we drove down to Jedburgh through magnificent scenery and pretty scary roads. Once there (another mill) we had time for a bite to eat and some more hold-filling purchases before heading down to Durham for our overnight stay. The Marriott at Durham is a beautiful hotel where most people had suites and Bert picked up some new 'curtain-making' ideas. We had several hours free time to enjoy Durham before settling down to an excellent dinner. Next day we completed our journey to South Wales, stopping for a couple of hours at Worcester for lunch.

The September day trip took us to Windsor, not raining just cold, very cold! First stop was to buy scarves and gloves. Some of the group had an enjoyable visit to Windsor Castle whilst others browsed through the shops etc. and enjoyed the day out. As usual Bert did his wind-up speech at the end of the trip, reminding people to take all their belongings with them etc. – and what does Bert do? He leaves a London bus money box he'd bought for his grandson and a cake on the rack! They never turned up so both he and his grandson lost out.

October brought us the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner at the Masonic Hall in Barry. This was very well attended and we were joined by one of our founder members, June Brown, as guest-of-honour, together with Margaret and Tony Matthews and Lyn and Jane Evans from the site. During the evening Margaret presented June with a Welsh slate clock on behalf of the Barry site and June, Margaret, Jane and Gloria were presented with bouquets from the Association. Entertainment was provided by 'Good Vibrations' Disco and the main raffle prize, £100 cheque, was won – very deservedly – by Betty Bull.

For 2008 we had been looking at a break in the Newcastle area, however Edwards have advised that their previously used hotel, the Hilton, have increased their prices by £40 per night – obviously Edwards would find selling such a break impossible as it would come out at around £450 for 5-days!! As an alternative we have been on a fact-finding mission to Ireland with Edwards organisers. They are currently working on a price for a 5/6 day break, based in Killarney and visiting the Ring of Kerry, a ride on the jaunting cars with a boat trip in Killarney National Park etc. As soon as prices/accommodation are known we will circulate details of this

*Brenda Dowdell, Photos by Mary Currie and the Dowdells*



## **Dow Corning Walking Group Step-by-Step walk around the Isle of Wight 23-28 June 2007**

### **DAILY ITINERARY AND "CAPTAIN'S LOG" HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **SATURDAY 23rd 22K (14 Miles in 6.5 hours with 302 metres of ascent)**

- Off to fanfares and compulsory photo start at Shanklin Cliff Lift. Bill sees us off.
- This is the day of the Annual Round the Island Yacht Race – 1800 yachts taking part!
- The stop at viewpoint at Culver Cliff gives spectacular views of Sandown and Shanklin bays with the yachts
- Crab baguettes at Bembridge Lifeboat View Café were delicious. The yachts keep on coming.
- Weather good – sunny and breezy.

#### **SUNDAY 24th 18K (11 Miles in 5.5 hours with 222 metres of ascent)**

- Day starts dull, damp with drizzle, which after a great lunch at The Sloop Inn at Wootton, turns to rain and didn't it rain.
- Whilst walking out of Wootton, Anne slips and falls onto her right arm and her right cheek. First aid administered. Mike Dams carries Anne's rucksack. That's a FIRST!
- Group becomes separated whilst "window-shopping" in Cowes. Mobile phones to the rescue and we all know who was on the right route don't we!
- Walk ends with cups of tea and beers in Woodvale Hotel in Gurnard, except we have to climb a "cliff" to pick up the mini-bus.
- Mike Dams offers to carry Mike Baron's rucksack in exchange for pint
- Anne visits Newport Hospital after dinner for precautionary check-up and has hairline fracture of right arm and badly bruised and grazed right cheek and chin. Arm in sling.

#### **MONDAY 25th 22K (14 Miles in 7 hours)**

- Mike shows his true caring self – now has responsibility for tying Anne's bootlaces – we have the photos to prove he not only managed this but also carried the rucksack all day.
- A Wet Day in IOW! (Floods in Sheffield, Rotherham and Worcester.) Dismal walking in torrential rain on roads and fields in morning, but brighter and breezy with scattered showers in afternoon.
- Close encounter with cattle in field after Rew Street diversion. Dave slips on sleeper. No damage to sleeper
- Anne joins us at New Inn for lunch after check up at hospital. All is stable. The pub looked like a laundry with all of our dripping gear hanging around the place.



- No tearooms, ice creams or pub at mini-bus pick up point and we arrived half an hour early! Good views though.
- Sorry no record of ascent today. Peter Clarke's GPS decided to add 200 metres whilst we were sat in pub. No, he did not jump up and down that many times! The food and beer was very good though.

**TUESDAY 26th 16K (11 Miles in 5.5 hours with 351 metres of ascent)**

- Anne back walking today, minus rucksack, plus sling.
- Yarmouth – a very pretty place with boats. Deli sells tasty pasties – ask Julia – they smelt gorgeous.
- Weather sunny at times, also heavy showers in morning. Cold and breezy with good visibility.
- More fun for Mike when he has to help Anne into waterproof trousers.
- After picnic in woods sheltering from rain, braved head height wet bracken following Mike Baron's upheld walking pole (or was it the where the heck are we bird?)
- Superb views over Hurst Castle, Colwell Bay, Totland Bay, Needles, Tennyson Down back over to Yarmouth and along the SW coastline. Alum Bay – ugh! Couldn't leave fast enough after ices and tea.
- Walk ends with lovely cups of tea, cream teas and beers in Freshwater Bay whilst waiting for mini-bus.
- Evening ends with Mike Baron taking a doze and snoring in hotel lounge. Video'd. It was a long hard day.

**WEDNESDAY 27th 19K (11.7 Miles in 5.5 hours with 450 metres of ascent.)**

- No rain today, but stiff, buffeting SW breeze on right shoulder all day.
- Ate picnic lunch in behind a hedge at Cliff Lane. Scenery was good in morning, but became boring in afternoon.
- Erosion of the cliff edge and numerous landslips evident all along the walk. 6-10 foot/year.
- Eleven chins (cwm's in welsh) with Whale chine the most spectacular.
- Walk ends at The Wight Mouse Inn, where we sit outside with pots of tea and pints of beer (Badger Stinger Ale made from stinging nettles) in the fresh breeze much to amusement of locals, until the sun went in and that prompted us to go inside and order Badger Gold.
- Photos outside Chale Church with a notice stating "Caution Walkers". We are harmless at the end of the day!

**THURSDAY 28th 16K (10 Miles in 5 hours with a lot of ascent)**

- Sunny. No rain again today, but the SW breeze is still with us. Good visibility.
- Good scenery, probably the best of the trek. Landslip area is significant from above.
- Eat lunch in Steephill Cove (pretty) and Minghelli's famous ice creams in Ventnor. Thanks for sticking out for the best Julia.
- Cross the finishing line/starting line at Shanklin Cliff Lift with delight and more photos! 71.7 miles completed and we still don't know who was right, Mike's pedometer or Pete's GPS.

**CONGRATULATIONS! A VERY GOOD WALK IN  
THE COMPANY OF A GOOD GROUP.**

Mike & Carol Baron, Peter Clarke, Mike and Anne Dams, Peter Davies, David & Julia Fulford, Bob Griffiths, Stuart & Margaret McMillan

Just to show that long distance walkers of some substance are truly mad, Dave, Peter Clarke, Margaret and Stuart all brave the briny and have a swim off Shanklin sands before joining the rest of the group in the Fisherman's Cottage pub for a ..... yes, you have guessed it, ..... a well-earned beer or two!

The Hambledon Hotel was superb throughout the holiday. Edita was a little sweetie and now we all know some Polish. We had a celebratory dinner to cap off a pleasant walking experience and started the planning for the 2008 walk.

The IOW ramblers—note Anne's sling



**Journey to Favela Vila Leblon Brazil**  
**November 2007**

My journey to Belo Horizonte Brazil to visit the Favela [Slum] Vila Leblon where the Barry Missionary Danny O'Brien his wife Sandra and son Lucas are working among the very poor people who live in the favela's. The flight from UK to Brazil took 30 hours, Heathrow to Paris, Paris to Sao Paulo then on to Belo Horizonte.

Belo Horizonte, the first modern Brazilian city to spring from an architect's drawing board, was especially designed for its role as the capital of the state of Minas Gerais. Its wide, landscaped avenues and carefully planned residential suburbs have, however, suffered the impact of the country's high rate of urbanization. Belo Horizonte is the distribution and processing centre of a rich agricultural and mining region and the nucleus of a burgeoning industrial complex. Its chief manufactures are steel, steel products, automobiles, and textiles. Gold, manganese, and gem stones of the surrounding region are processed in the city. Belo Horizonte is also a leading cultural centre, with three universities, a historical museum, numerous libraries, and sports stadiums. Because of its altitude (850m) the climate is refreshing and cool. It has a population of about 2.5 million inhabitants, and covers an area of 333 sq. km.

Though there is much variation from favela to favela, the shortage of utilities is constant. Some favelas have better access to different utilities due to their location. Regardless of this, all are below standard access. Clean water is a must and first and foremost in need. Water is usually accessed by tapping into a water main that runs near the favela.

This is always at the bottom of the hill and creates an incredibly difficult journey for those who live near the top. Several journeys a day are sometimes needed to gain enough for a household. Only about 50% of the favela's have access to an in-house toilet facility. From these facilities, sewerage runs through open ditches and eventually ends up at street level, creating an incredible health hazard. Electricity is scarce and very hard to access. The electric company connects outlets through only a few houses with meters, in the favela, and extension chords are run from these trunks to supply electricity to others. Each household is charged a fee per outlet, per month. This fee is usually much higher than what it would cost if it were metered directly. The demand is much higher than is being supplied and because of this, over tapped lines do not fulfil the need. When electricity is needed most, the evenings, there is hardly enough to run simple machines needed to bring in extra income (sewing machines, power tools, irons, etc..). Rubbish is either incinerated on the hill or brought down to the street where the city is supposed to haul it away. If incineration occurs, this can easily ignite many of the wooden houses and cause people to become sick due to the smoke. Since the city often does not live up to its obligation to haul away the rubbish, it can build up on street and also become a source for disease.

This is the background in which Danny O'Brien is working through AguAvivA , One Family helping Families. It was such a privilege to be with the team for 16 days. I visited people within the favela, these houses brought a new meaning to the phrase "You can't swing a cat in there" because in most you literally could not. Up to 5 people live in 2 rooms each the size of an average bathroom. Children run the street with no shoes on but are so happy. Their hospitality was amazing, although they have little they treat you like celebrities, the people are so warm and welcoming it was so humbling to be with them.

AguAvivA helps the people many in ways including food distribution. We went daily into Belo Horizonte to collect food from the restaurant to bring back for the favela people. The Popular restaurant is the first of it's kind in Brazil. It is run by the government and was set up by the Mayor of Belo to help those people who were poor. Every meal cost 1 Brazilian real, which is about 40 pence British money. Many people use this restaurant and AguAvivA has most of the food left over at the end of the day free. The AguAvivA team then pray for the food before it is distributed to the crowd of people waiting outside the house, each one has containers ready to collect the food and take it back to there families in the favela.

One of the reasons for my visit to the favela Vila Leblon was to witness the opening of the AguAvivA Church and help in the preparation before hand, also the extension of the School.

I have since returned to Wales with another video that I am willing to share with churches, house groups or fellowships or any other group who would want to know more about the Favela's of Brazil. Please phone  
*Dave Townsend, 01446 413307*

Dave Townsend with the Children at AguAvivA School in Vila Leblon Belo Horizonte



## Found

A gent's gold ring with diamonds has been sent to D.C. by M & S - it must have been found there. Leanne thinks it was given as part of an award scheme, therefore belonged to a Retiree, because it's inscribed Dow Corning Ltd 1989.

## Residues

Thanks to all of you who responded to the question about members of the 1970 Midland Silicones Cricket Team who appeared in the 2007 Newsletter. Identified so far are: Left to right:

Back Row: Delwyn Richards, ?, Bob Bubbins, Dave Arch?, Nev Whitfield, Milton Eskins, Fred Orchard, Alf Butcher,  
Front Row: Dave Jones, Howard Thomas, Dave Rogers Fred Saunders Geoff Winslade. Any new ideas?

Now to this year's question: This article appeared in the Albright & Wilson Newsletter, but which year?  
**£300,000 NEW PROJECT FOR BARRY**

Below can be seen a photograph of a model of the frontage of Midsil's Works at Barry. But it is a model with an extra something. A lot of things shown won't be seen at Barry— yet! For this is a look into the future. A glimpse of what visitors will first see when they come to the plant in 12 months time



The new lab. block will be the new home of somewhere in the region of a hundred people. This represents an increase in lab, staff of some 25%, but if Midsil's present rate of expansion is continued it will probably be found that yet another new building and more staff is needed by the time the present project is completed.

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



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