

DISTILLATIONS

September 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)***Update on the Travel Group to July 2008**

In January the Falmouth Beach Hotel, Cornwall was the first destination of the year and on the outward journey we stopped at the Jamaica Inn hotel for lunch. The accommodation at Falmouth, meals and situation (right opposite the beach) couldn't have been better. During the 5-day break excursions were made to Truro and Penzance. This short-break was very good value for money and Edwards were asked to provide a similar break for 2009. They came back with a 5-day holiday at the Imperial Hotel, Eastbourne for £139 in February. The take-up for this holiday was such that on day one of replies arriving there was only 1 single room left of our 49 place allocation hence a 12 person waiting list. We are currently negotiating for a 57-seater coach which will enable a further 8 members to join the trip.

During March a half-day was taken up with lunch and a chance to explore Cowbridge.

The group set off for Ireland in April for a 6-day break. *Our driver, Glyn, is one of Edwards' top drivers and he once famously set fire to a heap of German beach towels at an Italian hotel when none of his group could get a seat on the beach!* We sailed from Pembroke Dock to Rosslare with Irish Ferries and spent our first night at Dooley's Hotel in Waterford. Next morning we set off via Blarney Castle and Youghal Bay (where 'Moby Dick' was filmed) and made our way over to Killarney Towers Hotel in the centre of Killarney for three nights. During our stay we spent a day touring the Ring of Kerry with a guide (Byron) who kept us entertained with fact, fiction and a lot of jokes. We encountered some 'Irish Mist' during the drive so we retreated to a pub (complete with a wonderfully aromatic peat fire) for some Irish coffee to keep out the chill and some braved the rain to visit a 'typical Irish settlement of days gone by' in a nearby field! During this trip Edwards asked Glyn to arrange for a picture of our group to be taken for inclusion in Edwards' 2009 Summer Brochure which normally hits the shelves during November. Several more 'film sets' were pointed out including the beach where 'Ryan's Daughter' was filmed. One morning was spent on the jaunting cars riding through Killarney National Park to Ross Castle, it started raining during the trip but cleared up by the time we got to the Castle. Our last night was spent at the Quality Inn just outside Wexford and on the way we stopped off at Jamesons' Distillery for a guided tour (with samples) and Waterford Crystal (without samples).

Monthly trips commenced in May with a visit to Westonbirt Arboretum and Tetbury (of Prince Charles fame). In June the group went to Elan Valley where it rained..and rained..and rained — it was so bad that the reservoirs were



Whole group at Killarney Lakes, Ireland

abandoned and we ended up in Abergavenny instead. However, come July, the sun came out and we enjoyed an excellent trip to Totnes, a boat trip down to Dartmouth and a few hours free time to sample the delights of Devon.

For the rest of the 2008 there is the Annual Dinner on 16th October at the Barry Masonic Hall and the 4-day break to Chesterfield departing 14th November. Thanks to all our travellers for their continuing support and if you want your name added to the distribution list just ring 410437 or e-mail brenda_dowdell@msn.com
Brenda Dowdell



Dartmouth naval College

From One Old Fossil to Another

Have you ever thought about what holds the rocks or bricks of your house together?

500 Million years ago, England and Wales were sitting on the edge of a tectonic plate in a continent called Gondwana in Antarctica. Over the next 200 million years, England and Wales moved north at about 4.5 cm/yr finally crashing into Scotland, which itself had moved east from North America.

The impact of the collision caused the mountain ranges of Scotland. And the volcanoes on the edge of the tectonic plates created Snowdonia and the Lake District. All these mountains were originally as tall as the Himalayas but have since been eroded down to their current levels.

For most of the last 1000 million years the earth has been much warmer than now with no ice at the poles, except in 4 ice-ages of several million years (one of which we are emerging from today, which rather belies the futility of trying to stop global warming!).

So for 300 million years of this passage north, Britain was in subtropical and equatorial climates. And dense jungle covering the land alternated with warm seas where the land was submerged and shell creatures and coral flourished. Later these were to become the South Wales coalfields, and the limestone which makes up so much of our landscape.

Cement comes from limestone. So you see your house is held together by the remnants of equatorial sea creatures!

Robin Pitcher

Dow Corning Fitness Centre

As you are aware Dow Corning, Barry, opened a prestigious fitness centre in January 2008 for the exclusive use of current employees (but not spouses or partners) and retired Dow Corning employees (but not Midland Silicones retirees, or any spouses or partners). I believe the reason for the exclusions lay with either insurance, liability or taxation reasons. Unfortunately, this is non-negotiable

The facilities are excellent with a relaxed and social atmosphere. Some 400 of the current DC's 600 employees have been inducted to use the facility and 25 retirees have already been inducted.

A new Fitness Centre Programme has been introduced this week and includes pilates, step and tone, body sculpture, multi fit and cardio core exercise classes. Each class is about 45 minutes in duration and takes place according to a 5-day weekly time table between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm, or between 4.30 pm and 6.30 pm. Classes are undertaken under the supervision and guidance of a fitness instructor. Two new fitness instructors have just started, Shevaun McKenna and Janine Wilson-Dickson.

Whilst talking with Sarah Thornhill (Fitness Centre Manager) recently, she made a number of offers for those Retirees that have not joined.

Sarah would willingly welcome and induct each new retiree to the centre, discuss your individual fitness requirements, carry out an informal fitness assessment and develop for you your own tailored fitness programme. If you have a medical condition, you may be asked to discuss this with your GP

Additionally, if there is sufficient interest, Sarah is very keen to establish a Retirees fitness class, specially tailored for retirees needs. The proposal is to hold the class on Friday mornings from 11.00 to 12.00 and followed with free coffee in the lounge. Incidentally this idea was proposed at a previous Retirees Quarterly meeting.

If you are interested please contact Sarah ASAP on 01446 746802 for an appointment, or a discussion as she will be going on maternity leave shortly.

Stuart McMillan

DC Walking Group's visit to Alsace

Monday. On a sunny morning in June 9 brave members of the DC Walking Group left Cardiff Central station to venture further afield than usual. After a change of stations in London we caught the Eurostar from St Pancras to Paris and then on to Strasbourg. There we picked up two Ford C-Max's and set off on the last leg of our journey. The 2 drivers communicated, supposedly, by walkie talkie. However we had an interesting diversion into Herrlisheim when Mike, who was navigating in the second car forgot to tell Pete who was driving the leading car when to make the switch onto the N83. Nice flowers and a pretty village! The hotel, Rouge Gazon, was located 17 km up a twisting road out of St Maurice sur Moselle and 1000m above sea level. We eventually made it at around 10.00 pm after 12 hours travelling.

Tuesday. On our first day, we decided to take it easy and do a relatively short walk. We walked down to the Lac Des Perches and the Grand and Petit Neuweiher lakes and then to le Gresson Moyen au Ferme Auberge where we had an excellent home made quiche with fresh lettuce, just picked, and potato salad plus, of course, a choice of beer and wine

Wednesday. The weather was poor – rain and a thunderstorm, but we decided to drive to Haute-Saône and do a couple of walks from the Topo Guide book centred around Le Haut du Them. The first started with a stiff climb through the woods with a gentle rain falling and on to Chateau Lambert, where there is a Cosmeston-like medieval village. Unfortunately, we arrived 15 minutes too late to take a tour, so after a coffee, made our way back to La Haut du Them, where we had an excellent lunch of leek tart, followed by a bacon, potato and mushroom omelette with loads of frites before we completed another walk which involved the same start but then onto a different route through the woods



Coffee at Auberge Refuge de Neuweiher

Thursday. Having built up our walking distance we decided to go for it today and walk to the highest peak in the district, le Ballon d'Alsace. To make it more difficult, we chose to go via the lakes, a longer distance with more climbing. The walk to the Ballon d'Alsace was long and hard, particularly the last stretch up to the top of the hill which involved some scrambling up over rocks and along water courses. After an interesting and very rustic lunch which consisted of a stew of various body parts of different animals along with potatoes and carrots and a green side salad we set off back to the hotel. Pete's GPS indicated we had walked 20.7 kms. with a total height climbed of 1,243 metres, probably a record for this group for any of our walks

Friday. Today we decided to find a walk which didn't spend so much time in the beech woods, so drove to the Mille Étangs area. We started the walk from Beulotte-St. Laurent through an area with a very interesting mixture of ponds, meadows, some woods and a few houses and lots of wild flowers, birds and even a baby frog. At the end of the walk, we had a good lunch at a local café, which consisted of omelette, sausages, salad and bread, followed by cheese and a selection of home made tarts. After lunch, we drove to Gérardmer and its lake. It was very quiet; obviously the holiday season had not yet begun. We wandered along the lake front before getting so cold we were all glad to find a café, where everyone had a coffee, except Bob who decided to indulge in a knickerbocker glory.

Saturday. Today was the day for another long walk which our host, Christian, had showed us. He'd said his route would take us around 5 hours, but the shorter one we did eventually took us 8.5 hours! His time must have been measured on his mountain bike!

At the outset we started walking along the same track that a French mountain bike group were riding, which made for an interesting descent. We stopped for a coffee at an old ferme auberge which didn't look as though it had changed much in the past 100 years and where the owner was frying up a large pan overflowing with sliced potato. After some detours we found the auberge for lunch, and sat outside for another rustic lunch – this time a planche which consisted of a mixture of ham, saucissons, boudin noir, speck and hard and soft cheeses with rough country bread, all washed down with beer or wine. Some of the party struggled with the quantity and richness of the food and fed much of it to the resident old cross-bred German shepherd dog. On the way back we came across the mountain bike group—they had covered 40 kms in the same time we'd taken to do around 17 kms.

Sunday. The weather today was awful – rain and cold - so we decided to go to Haut-Koenigsbourg, a twentieth century reconstruction of a much earlier medieval castle. It reminded us of Castell Coch, both in the red sandstone with which it was built and the way it had been renovated. We stopped for lunch at a restaurant in Ribeauvillé, a village on the Wine Route, for a 'tarte flambée' which seemed to be the main local dish. This turned out to be nothing more than a pizza with similar choices of toppings. Most of us finished up with ice cream and hot chocolate sauce! We took a walk along the main street where we bought souvenirs and photographed storks nesting on the roofs of the houses

Monday. We set off early today to avoid being late for our train from Strasbourg. Good progress was made until we hit a lorry drivers' strike on the A35 autoroute! Slowing to little more than walking pace, we managed to leave at the next exit. We thought we had been clever as trucks could not leave here. The master-plan was soon thwarted by the

French police who had blockaded the intended alternative route and taking to smaller roads was the only answer. Dave was driving one car with Stuart navigating and we sped through small French villages at some margin over the speed limit with Julia, Val & Margaret in the back staying very quiet (unusual that). Meanwhile Pete, despite Mike's navigating, managed to take the wrong exit into Strasbourg and explored the suburbs before finding the Gare Centrale. Dave arrived at the rental return with 10 minutes to go. Passengers & luggage were dumped on level one while the car was returned to top floor! However we all made it onto the platform just in time to catch the TGV to Paris Est.

The debate continues about how many miles we walked each day. Mike relied on his pedometer, but was accused of taking too many mincing steps. Meanwhile Pete used his GPS, but maybe the trees masked our route. Eventually we agreed to use Pete's Memory Map which gave a total of 72 km. Thanks to our 'Captain' Pete Clarke for planning the venture. Also thanks to Margaret and Stuart McMillan, Julie and Dave Fulford, Ann and Mike Dams and Bob Griffiths for a memorable holiday.

This article is an edited version of the 'Captain's Log'

Val Caple

Cowbridge Physic Garden

I have been involved with the garden since the project was first discussed during a meeting of the South and Mid Glamorgan Branch of the Welsh Historic Garden Trust. The plan was to create an 18th century physic garden in an overgrown plot of land in the centre of Cowbridge, using a layout and plants typical of the period. The land is owned by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and was known as the Grammar School Kitchen garden. It had previously belonged to the Edmondes family who lived in Old Hall (now the Community Centre). The Council had planted a tree nursery in the 1990s, but the trees were now very tall and the site also contained various pieces of abandoned gardening equipment and greenhouses.

Once the Cowbridge Physic Garden Trust (CPGT) was set up, the Council gave us a 25-year lease for a peppercorn rent. An initial grant from the Creative Rural Communities initiative paid for the heavy work including tree clearance, completing a site survey, laying planting beds and footpaths, repairing walls, including a section of the medieval town walls, and building a new wall to divide the area from Old Hall gardens.

In 2005 we obtained a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the local volunteers who would dig the soil and start the planting. The grant paid for a part-time co-ordinator, plants and garden equipment. In addition we were very grateful to the large number of local residents who sponsored trees, benches, architectural features and planting beds. Without all this support progress would have been much slower.

The garden opened to the public in 2007, complete with potting sheds, a pergola, fountain and two summer houses. The beds are either assigned to plants which were used to treat various parts of the body, e.g. eyes, nerves, bones, or to those with a 'commercial' use, e.g. dyestuffs, cosmetics, cooking. It was officially opened by HRH The Duchess of Cornwall on June 26th 2008, when she spoke to the trustees, volunteers and members who were invited to meet her.

The garden has proved a popular attraction in Cowbridge both to visitors from all over the country and to locals who use it for picnics, learning about the uses of the plants or relaxing in the beautiful quiet space close to the shops and offices. The challenge now is to continue to maintain the garden without a regular income. The gardening volunteers meet every Thursday to weed and plant, while other volunteers plan the financial future. We are supported financially by over 400 members of the CPGT who receive a regular Newsletter and are invited to special events in the garden.

Please come and visit. Entry is free and the garden is open every day from 10.00 to 4.00 pm (6.00 pm in summer). The garden is designed to be accessible and there is parking off the street behind Old Hall.

For more photos and information visit www.cowbridgephysicgarden.org.uk or contact me

Val Caple, membership secretary, CPGT



Aerial view of the garden

Angus and Mavis Crockett retire

After many years serving as Treasurer – with Mavis as unofficial secretary / assistant – Angus is retiring, as is Mavis. At the A. G. M. the Committee presented them with gifts in thanks for their hard work and diligence. We are very lucky as they have both agreed to continue to serve on the Committee and to undertake some of their existing duties.

Residues

£300,000 NEW PROJECT FOR BARRY. The article was reprinted from a newspaper published in 1961.

Please send photographs for inclusion in future issues of Distillations to Val Caple. These could include historic photographs or those from recent DC Retirees' Events. Prints or .jpeg files are OK, prints and CD's will be returned