

DISTILLATIONS

September 2012

Dear Member,

We were all very sad to lose Angus Crockett earlier this year. As well as taking over as Treasurer for a second stint, he was always the life and soul of our meetings and events. Our thoughts are with Mavis.

Two of our longstanding, hard working Committee members decided it was time that they took things easier; Mavis, secretary, and Mary, who filled many essential roles, including supplying tea and cakes at Committee meetings. I wish them well in their second retirement and know we will still meet them at DC events!

However, despite many challenges during the last year, the DC Retirees Association will continue to operate. At the AGM Robert Wardle was confirmed as Secretary (and will also help Brenda and Bert organise trips) and Richard Thomas as Treasurer. Three new members were welcomed to the committee, Brian Clements, Derek Butler and Sue Sugden who, together with her husband Jim, has, for many years, organised skittle nights on behalf of the association. I am sure all three will be assets to the committee and the association.

A Great Day Out to Sidmouth

July was a very wet month with severe flooding affecting many parts of the UK. Two days previous to our visit and just further along the coast, a main road had to be closed off because part of it had washed away in a localised flood. Sidmouth, which is situated on the south-west coast path of Devon, is a town caught still in a 'timeless charm'. It nestles in an area of outstanding beauty on the Jurassic Coast looking over an esplanade and golden sandy beach and sea. Sidmouth boasts over 500 listed buildings, many of which are relics of Sidmouth's heyday in the Regency era. In the early 19th century the Duke of Kent passed away in the Royal Glen Hotel. Sidmouth's residents lined the streets in silent respect when the funeral cortege left the village.

Fortunately all 46 members of our day trip all left together.

The weather was kind and was the sunniest that it had been for many weeks. As you can see we were able to stroll around without coats and jackets and not a brolly in sight.

The cliffs are red sandstone.

Robert Wardle.



Sidmouth seafront July 19th 2012

From the left; Nora Lindop, Rob Wardle, Mavis Crockett, Jane Wardle, Diane Doble, Enid Flanagan

Photo by Ken Doble

Olympics News

I can never get enough of the Olympics. I'm a huge fan. That has applied to all the Olympics I've watched over the years, but the London ones were something special.

That's not just because I was there, both working as a volunteer (Games Maker!) and as a spectator for a day. Nor is it because the GB Team did so well, (third in the International medal table, and not that far behind the US!). I think the main reason is that the whole games (especially at the Eton Dorney Rowing and Canoeing centre) went without a hitch, the London transport system did not become grid-locked and I didn't hear of any athletes suffering food poisoning! It also stirred my patriotic pride to see the wonderful backdrop of London and other spectacular sights of Britain.

This was especially true of the marathon races, which passed such iconic landmarks as Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square, the South Bank, St Paul's Cathedral and Tower Bridge, but the road cycling races and triathlons also featured some wonderful tourist spots.

I was working at Eton Dorney, 20 miles west of London, where the rowing and canoe sprint events took place. The backdrop there is Windsor Castle and one of the loveliest stretches of the River Thames. The racing was on a splendid, custom-built rowing centre on a lake next to the Thames at Eton. It was built for a local school, and is, in my opinion, the best rowing venue in Europe (possible exception being Lake Lucerne). I spent one day there as a spectator, unfortunately not on a finals day – tickets sold out too fast for that! I did see some spectacular Rowing races, and was part of the 'Dorney Roar' that all the competitors remark about (the GB ones at least!).

I also managed to sneak out while working there to see two of the Gold medals won by GB. I managed as well to watch a third race on a guy's mobile phone as I rode from the car park on the site 'shuttle bus' at the start of my shift. As we dismounted from the bus we heard the roar from the crowd as GB won their first gold medal! When I thanked the guy for letting me watch on his 'phone, I discovered he was from New Zealand – they got bronze! My commiseration was less than sincere I'm afraid, but he took it well! I did refrain from pointing out that Australia took the silver.

I worked for ten days over the four weeks of athlete training and then racing in the VCC (Venue Communications Centre) at Dorney. This means I didn't see much of the racing but heard it over the radio (and could watch it on TV with the

sound off!). I didn't have to deal with anything more serious than a couple of lost (and found!) children and several missing (also found) mobility buggies. My most serious mistake was to announce at 7pm one day that the BBC was closing down (I had meant to say VCC but when you're tired...).

There were some amusing stories, like the one about the disabled spectator who didn't like any of the wide range of mobility scooters/buggies etc. we had on offer (security policy meant he was not allowed to use his own) – so he decided to walk! There was also the radio call I received from one of the stewards in the spectator area informing me that the knob had fallen from the top of the Canadian flagpole – what should he do with it? We had several ideas, none of which were suitable for radio transmission, so we asked him to bring 'the Canadian knob' with him next time he was passing our way. We had a lot of laughs with it that afternoon!

It was a tiring experience. Long days, a lot of travelling (Cardiff is 150 miles from Dorney) and disruption of your daily routine takes its toll (on body and pocket!), but I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I was able to stay with some friends in nearby Slough for one of the weeks, which made a huge difference. As I said at the start I can't get enough of the Olympics, and it was great to be a part of it this time.

As always I was glued to the television or radio whenever I could so not to miss any of the action. The BBC coverage was superb, new digital technology meant I could watch whichever sport I chose. For example I was able to watch water polo for the first time – now there's an extreme sport! I also watched some of the sailing, and for the first time was able to understand who had won each race and why! Driving home from Dorney on the first Saturday of the athletics I listened on the radio, as GB won 3 athletics gold medals in a single hour, making it six golds for GB in total that day! In contrast to some earlier games (Atlanta in particular), Team GB did spectacularly well as I said above. Even Yorkshire was ahead of Australia in an unofficial medals table at one point!

Now the main games are over it all seems a bit of an anticlimax. However, next week marks the start of the Paralympics games. I can't wait for the wheelchair rugby – I'm told it's absolutely brutal! The cyclists and rowers are pretty awesome too.

Tim Hellis. August 2012



See <http://www.london2012.com/venue/eton-dorney>

Excerpts from Captain's Log – Trekking in the Azores – June 5th to 12th 2012

Our aim was to explore the beautiful mid-Atlantic islands of the Azores and seek the superb views and scenery by undertaking a series of walks. The Azorean islands are an autonomous region of Portugal, spread over 300 miles in the ocean and are a true paradise for nature lovers: in the fanciful forms of its blue lakes surrounded by flowers; in its lofty peaks of its mountains with overwhelming views across the land, nearby islands, or sea; in the deep verdant craters of its dormant volcanoes. In the breathtaking landscape that has maintained its natural purity. We came to visit the pastoral tranquillity, hear the melody of silence, so that we could return home with lingering memories of truly magic places.

Day 1. Flight to Sao Miguel. We assembled at Gatwick on a direct flight to the main island of the Azores. Going through airport security always reveals something. This trip was no exception as a camping knife was found in Richard's rucksack!

Day 2. Sao Miguel. With restricted bus services on a Sunday morning we took taxis to Lomba da Cruz for an easy low level coastal walk to Mosteiros. Lunch was taken in a café in the village of Ginetes, always an interesting experience when you do not speak much Portuguese and the owner does not speak English or Welsh. We arrived in Mosteiros to have an ice cream whilst waiting for the return journey taxis.

Day 3. The Furnas area on Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Day. Today we took taxis to Lagao das Furnas with favourable warm and sunny weather and walked around part of the lake shore to the Caldeiras area of volcanic activity – springs of hot sulphur smelling water, steam and hot mud. After lunch we took in a walk around Parque Terra Nostra with beautiful valleys, water features, trees and shrubs, save the large pool of orange-brown sulphur smelling water that people were swimming in - none of our group were enticed! We took a road to return to our taxi pick-up point, but after a lot of deliberation, lots of advice from the group members, the navigator (Stuart) boldly took the decision to march us up to the top of a hill and lo and behold we could see we were not where we wanted to be!! So, we walked down the other side of the hill, called the taxis and they obligingly drove over and picked us up, all hot and sweating! The taxis then took us for a tour that included an elevated view of Lagao das Furnas and a visit to the only tea plantation in Europe. We wound around the hairpins until we reached a viewpoint over Lagao do Fogo (Lake of smoke, fire, or probably cloud) before descending via more hairy hairpins to a National Park, where we visited a geothermic waterfall and another sulphur smelling pool.



Geothermal waterfall

As this was our Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee Day Margaret and Stuart had Union Jack flags stuck in their rucksacks all day. We decided to celebrate in style, so had strings of Union Jack flags, photographs of Queen and Prince Phillip, decorated beakers and flags adorning our dinner table and surrounding area, much to the amusement of the hotel staff and guests

Day 4. Nine Windows Wall to Sete Cidades.

The name Nine Windows Wall: apparently comes from the number of arches in a stone built aqueduct. The route took us through woods, up a couple of steep slopes with some stunning views over the north coast of the island and around half of the crater rim above the twin lakes of Sete Cidades, one blue and one green, along the long, undulating but safe ridge. The track descended steeply to reach the village of Sete Cidades with a nice café. While exploring the bridge between the two lakes we were invited into a farmhouse where preparations were in hand to celebrate a local religious festival with ornate decorations and delicacies.

Day 5. Flight to Sao Jorge and walk from Parque Sete Fortes. We flew from Sao Miguel to Sao Jorge via Terceira. Although this will be an inter-island flight, airport security and baggage searches are just as stringent. Just as well because one of our party is carrying his **second** camping knife in his hand luggage, which was duly confiscated for the safety of flight crew and passengers alike. Our hotel owner took us to Casa do Antonio, a privately owned guest house of some character with views of the harbour. After lunch we made our way out to the NW end of Sao Jorge to see the isolated lighthouse with views of the island of Pico to the south and Graciosa to the north.

Day 6. Pico de Pedro to Porta de Norte Grande. Sao Jorge is like a long Havana cigar with a mountain range running down the middle that affords breathtaking views either side to the coast below and neighbouring islands. We chose a superb walk that started high up and traversed the ridge before dropping down to the small village of Grande Norte. The path then plunged down some 600 metres over the high cliffs to the small port below called Porta de Norte Grande. What a pretty place, with the sea so clear and inviting that Richard could not resist, whilst others had coffee, beer and ice cream.

Day 7. Santo Antonio Chapel to Faja de Alon. Today's walk included a 600 metre descent down over the cliff on a rocky, stony, wet, very narrow, overgrown path down to an isolated 'village' of some 12 or so houses on the flat tongue of land that pushes out into the sea from the cliff face. We only met one villager and after a quick reconnoitre around the scattered, subsistence cottages (no mains water, electricity or jetty, but with sewers and an aerial ropeway to bring supplies in and out) we faced the task of climbing back out. The only relief until you reached the top was cool pools of water fed by cascading streams and waterfalls to wash you face and arms with. We returned to our hotel for lunch and said our good-byes to Val and Robin.

Day 8. Ferry from Sao Jorge to Sao Roque do Pico. After a 45 minute fast catamaran ferry trip we were taken to our hotel, a Captain's house, Casa De Flores. At 10 pm each evening we were greeted with a crescendo of hundreds of shearwaters squawking on the cliffs behind the house – we got used to it in the end.

Day 9. Whale watching in Pico. We awoke after heavy rain overnight to find low cloud and low visibility – unfortunately this was to be the situation for the two days we were on Pico. Pico island is dominated by Pico mountain, at 7711 feet the highest mountain in the whole of Portugal. Any thought of climbing Pico was nullified by the low cloud - Shame! Fortunately Lajes is set up to run whale watching trips in fast rubber boats so most of us watched whales for 3 hours.

Day 10. Ferry to Faial. We taxied around the coast to catch the ferry to Faial. Over lunch there we watched the many trans-Atlantic yachts - these yachts often leave an ornately painted plaque on the quayside walls in a wide-ranging selection of pictures and facts about the yacht, the route, the crew and achievements.

Day 11. Walk to Praia du Norte. Today we undertook a short walk down to a sandy beach. The walk down was hot and humid through trees and leaves, but the black sand beach had a huge swell running which negated any thoughts of swimming unfortunately, so we chose an alternative track back up to the road and found a welcoming café for lunch.

Day 12. Walk from Caldeira to Parque Forestal do Capelo. The walk we choose for today is a Faial classic, reaching the highest point on the Island and then largely descending to a forest park near the coast in the west. As we climbed up around the volcano crater rim to Cabeco Gordo at 1043m we were scrambling in dense cloud and getting soaking wet in the wind. The route down took us for a pleasant walk through forests, pasture and along a 'levada' (a stone irrigation channel) for about a mile across viaducts and bridges as it transports the water from the wet side of the island to a reservoir on the dry side, near to the townships. A wonderful walk – shame about the weather.

Day 13. Boating in Horta. Today we agreed to take a trip in a glass bottomed boat. The boat was Russian designed and manufactured and with its big domed front window, sloping stern and a huge glass viewing dome in the bottom, it looked very futuristic. The crew were excellent in explaining the different fish we encountered, the most significant being the big rays and then took us to a spot where we could witness undersea volcanic activity, with big bubbles of gas rising from the sea-bed.

Day 14. Faial Island Tour and flight to Sao Miguel. We took a delightful round the Island tour, stopping where'er we pleased for photos, lunch, visiting the 1953 volcanic activity area of Capelinhos and finally to the airport. Jenny was able to collect Richard's confiscated knife on arrival back at Ponta Delgada airport. That's service for you.

Day 15. Home. The Azorean holiday was over, but plenty of wonderful memories remain, plus the thousands of photos we took as a group as a permanent record.

Trekkers: Val Caple, Mike and Anne Dams, Bob Griffiths, Margaret and Stuart McMillan, Robin Pitcher, Richard and Jennie Thomas.

Stuart McMillan



Jubilee Celebrations

Skittles

On Saturday 25th August Jim and I managed to organise a skittle match, which all those who attended enjoyed. We were a bit thin on the ground due to holidays and family commitments. If any other retirees are interested in joining our skittle evenings, which we hope to have every month to six weeks, please tell them to get in touch with us.

Jim and Sue Sugden, sueandjim9@talktalk.net or 01446 739404

Hospital Visits

I was in hospital for 7 weeks (with a broken knee) from 27th January and it was not a pleasant experience! I was in what is now called "West Wing", but was previously the old maternity hospital. The main problem was not the care, which was good, but the boredom: There were no regular newspapers and no TV or e-mail. The tedium was broken only by visits from my family and from ex-colleagues at DC, to whom I would like to extend a special thank you. Heroes all because of lack of parking and inaccessibility.

The other problem that I suffered was RED tape. It was very difficult to find out your date of release: do not ask why this should be but it was! The one item that was a surprise was the standard of the food which was very good (although not so good that I'll miss it!) and, as mentioned previously, on the whole the staff were very kind. The key learning that I would like to share with everyone is, if you have colleagues confined to hospital, please break up their day WITH VISITS! Until it happens to you, you have no idea how important regular contact with people from the world outside is. So, once again, a big thank you to all my former colleagues who came to visit.

John I Evans

I Remember the Cheese of my Childhood

I remember the cheese of my childhood
And the bread that we cut with a knife,
When the children helped with the housework,
And the men went to work not the wife.
The cheese never needed a fridge,
And the bread was so crusty and hot,
The children were seldom unhappy
And the wife was content with her lot.
I remember the milk from the Billy,
With the yummy cream on the top,
Our dinner came hot from the oven,
And not from the fridge in the shop.
The kids were a lot more contented,
They didn't need money for kicks,
Just a game with our mates in the paddock,
And sometimes the Saturday flicks.
I remember the shop on the corner,
Where a pen'orth of lollies was sold
Do you think I'm a bit too nostalgic?
Or is it....I'm just getting old?

I remember when the 'loo' was the 'dunny',
And the pan man came in the night,
It wasn't the least bit funny
Going out the back with no light.
The interesting items we perused,
From the newspapers cut into squares,
And hung on a peg in the outhouse,
It took little to keep us amused.
The clothes were boiled in the copper,
With plenty of rich foamy suds
But the ironing seemed never ending
As Mum pressed everyone's 'duds'.
I remember the slap on my backside,
And the taste of soap if I swore
Anorexia and diets weren't heard of
And we hadn't much choice what we wore.
Do you think that bruised our ego?
Or our initiative was destroyed
We ate what was put on the table
And I think our life was better enjoyed.

Thanks to Lynn & Roger Bennett

Residues

Many thanks to this year's contributors—we would not have a Newsletter without you.

Please continue to send photos to Robin Pitcher (robin.pitcher@talktalk.net or contact him on 02920-514051) for inclusion on the website at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dcbarry/> where photographs of MS and DC can be stored and viewed. These could include historic photos or those from recent DC Retirees' Events. If you do not have a computer please check your local library where staff can help you get online. The photo of the Badminton team of 1980 is a recent addition to the website

Please send articles or photos for inclusion in future issues of Distillations to Val Caple at any time—if I received more input you would receive more issues each year!



1980 DC Badminton Tour Malta; Martin Rodwell, Alun Jones, Don Surridge, Peter Merritt, John Shewring



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