

Dear Member,

Brenda and Bert Dowdell have resigned from the Committee and as Social Events organisers. This marks the end of a 17 year era with this association. We will all come to appreciate them even more when we try to fill the void they have both left. Both of them have taken us on many memorable day trips and short breaks throughout those years and we thank them for that.

We welcome Ken Doble who has offered to help organise day trips and short breaks with the assistance of Sue and Jim Sugden.

Social Events

Brenda and Bert signed off after they had organised a return visit to the Palace Hotel in Paignton in February. 46 members enjoyed the great hotel, great food, but very cold, windy weather. However they all enjoyed themselves with trips to Dartmouth, Totnes and the House of Marbles at Newton Abbott, not forgetting time in Torquay for those interested. Quite a few members also took advantage of the nearby cinema to enjoy Les Mis., soaking many hankies in the process, with others winning more spending money at the nightly ½ hour of bingo at the hotel.

On June 21 this year, Ken Doble arranged a day trip to Forde Abbey on the border of Dorset in an area known for its outstanding beauty. It is a family home and a real working estate. The abbey dates back to 1148. It was called 'Ford' because of its proximity to an old river crossing. Built originally as a Cistercian monastery it is privately owned by the Roper family and in 2002 they celebrated a centenary of ownership by installing a 160 foot fountain in the 30 acre gardens. However much of the original monastery, including the abbey church was demolished in the period after the dissolution; only two statues, now on display in the Great Hall, have been found from the original church. The monastic parts of the current house are the Great Hall, the north side of the original square of the cloisters as well as the monk's accommodation, the Upper Refectory and the Undercroft, which was the abbey's working area, and the Chapter House, which has been converted into a chapel. Other rooms have been subsequently converted into State Rooms and show evidence of their earlier use.

Ken has also arranged a four day break in February to Liverpool which members who were present on the Forde Abbey trip requested. The short break will include a guided Beatles tour and, of course, a trip across the Mersey is a must.

For whatever reasons, 2013 have seen members joining either the day trips or short breaks slowly dwindling. However on a positive note we are grateful to those members who have invited friends and relatives to 'join in' which has helped swell the numbers helping us to keep costs as low as practical.

Brenda Dowdell and Robert Wardle

Retirees Annual Dinner

It has been agreed that we will hold our annual retirees dinner in May 2014 rather than the October/November 2013 as in past years, partly because it was felt and reported by many do not like to go out in the dark and cold of October. A small group of members have been working to identify a suitable venue and organise the event. It has been identified that there are few venues that can accommodate up to 90 diners and at a reasonable cost. The Masonic Hall in Barry is still the front runner and a date and menu is being negotiated.

It will be a less formal affair that in the past but still promises value for money and a chance to catch up with old friends. So watch this space for more details. If you have any ideas or suggestions please let us know through contacting Derek Butler or Ruth Beasley.

We would also like any photographs of previous annual dinners and attendees to add to our photo gallery so if you have any please forward to Val at the address on page 4.

Derek Butler



Ken and 40-year old friend



Nora and Mavis at Forde Abbey



Annual dinner 2012

Skittles

A skittles evening was held on Saturday August 3 at the Barry Rugby Club. Our organisers said that due to holidays, other commitments and illnesses only 13 members attended. All who attended enjoyed the evening with a relaxed atmosphere catching up with friends during the refreshment break. There was also the usual banter as members took their rolls.

Finally we hope to arrange two or three skittle events before Christmas. Please contact Jim or Sue if you want to come along for the evening.

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

DCRA Website

Val Caple, with the help of other committee members, has now set up an association website. Here you will find drop down menus which include Robin's photographs, copies of past Newsletters and meeting minutes etc. We also include booking forms for forthcoming trips and short breaks, information on forthcoming walks and skittle evenings plus many other interesting topics.

If you have been receiving information by email we will let you know when new information has been posted to the web. Minutes will be filed on the website and will not sent out as an attachment as is the current situation. Members who are not on email will still receive copies of the minutes in the normal manner.

If you would like to see a particular topic added, please contact Val or another committee member.

The website can be found at www.dcretirees.org.uk

Val Caple



Volunteers needed for new “Friendship Group”.

The association is planning to launch a “Friendship Group” on 1st January 2014 with the aim of providing assistance to members “in need”. The type of assistance provided may include:

- Hospital visits
- Home visits
- Short transport journeys such as hospital appointments
- Running errands

To be able to provide such assistance, the new group will need volunteers and as such the association is reaching out to you the members to support this initiative and become a volunteer to help fellow members in need.

This year's membership subscription form has a box that can be ticked by anyone prepared to consider becoming a volunteer. Those who tick the box will be contacted at a later date to discuss what areas they would consider volunteering for. Please give some thought to ticking the box, the “Friendship Group” will struggle to be successful without the help of DCRA members.

For those members who find themselves in the unfortunate situation of needing the help provided by the “Friendship Group” (when such help cannot be provided by family and friends who should always be the first port of call), the initial contact will be:

Bryan Clements (Group Leader/Coordinator): Tel.: 01446 733499, Email: jamesbclements@talktalk.net
The back-up contact will be:

Richard Thomas: Tel. 01446 737218, Email rjthomas@maintop.co.uk

Please note that the service will not be active until 1st January 2014.

Captain's Log – Las Alpujarras, Andalucia, Spain

With easy access and a superb climate, the Alpujarras traverse the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada which rise to over 3300 metres and offer excellent and varied walking opportunities. Here narrow roads wind their way around the folds of the mountains connecting whitewashed villages clinging to the hillside or perched over a ravine. Few cars pass this way - the villages were designed for two or four-legged transport, so donkey and mules abound even today. Views are far reaching across the deep valleys to the Mediterranean coast at Almeria (sometimes even across to Morocco and north Africa). Granada, with its Alhambra Palace and strong Moorish influence is to the north of the mountains.

We were staying in a small village called Mairena in a collection of adjoining and delightfully restored cottages that formed our hotel, Casa las Chimineas. It is owned and managed by a British couple who are keen walkers and paid full attention to detail and communication to ensure we enjoyed the food, wine and varied walks available. They also provided mini-bus transport to drop off points or pick up before and after our walks. All meals in the hotel were cooked by a local woman who used traditional local recipes and locally grown ingredients. The hotel had a small plunge pool and small enclosed gardens and terraces for taking the sun and pre-dinner drinks.

Monday 17th June 2013: We assembled at Birmingham airport at 0500 hrs for the flight to Almeria where Emma and David, our hosts, were waiting with a mini-bus. Just two hours later we arrived in Mairena, about 1000m up in the Alpujarras Mountains. We then went exploring our new village which was small but had two pubs and one sort of shop.

Tuesday: A walk from the hotel to the nearby village of Jubar and then around to Laroles. The picnic lunch made up by the hotel was quite different, bread, carrots, tomato, cucumber, cheese, jar of pate, apple, cake and chocolate biscuits. Very good! We had a drink in bar in Laroles before walking back to hotel. It is customary in this part of Spain to be presented with a free snack whenever you order an alcoholic drink – like it! We needed to drink a lot as it was very hot and dry (honest!) Throughout the holiday our walks were regularly punctuated by stops for coffee, tea or soft drinks but the main purpose for some walkers (Richard and Mike in particular) was to sample the local cakes, deserts or gooey sweetmeats.

Wednesday: A fairly level walk from Mairena to Valor and Yegen following the GR 75 walking trail along the 1000m contour line. The path was closed on leaving Valor as a Roman bridge had collapsed, so we had to detour first up, then down, then up again to get back on track. We had been recommended to eat in a café that was run by a ‘Scouse’ lady. The food was of a rustic nature but OK, just. Later went onto Jubar village church for a conducted tour by David. It had wall paintings like those in Llancarfan church.

Thursday: A walk to the village of Ugijar. Unusually it was a downhill walk all the way! The path crossed soft sandy soil that was deeply ravined by streams making it what the locals called ‘badland’ as it was difficult to cultivate and use effectively for farming. It was market day but it was mostly clothes on sale with very little local food to savour or souvenirs to buy. After lunch in a local bar we walked (sometimes in the wrong direction) to a bodega for a tour and wine tasting. It was owned by a Spanish/American couple and run as a ‘hobby’ but bottled over 100,000 bottles of wine a year. We tasted 4 wines and then bought quite a few bottles, as one does. We needed the mini-bus lift to carry our purchases and to allow David to restock the hotel bar!

Friday: The mini-bus dropped us by the roadside near Posada de los Arrieros, a mountain lodge at about 1800m for a nice long downhill walk (we thought) in the valley to Laroles, via Bayarcal. However the downhill was accompanied by 730m of ascent as well, so it proved to be a long hard walk. Some of the ravine sides were deep and steep but gave wonderful views and scenery with plenty of wild flowers and birds to spot, but the path was slippery in places which caused consternation to some especially when near precipices or passing bee hives. We ate a delightful hotel prepared lunch at the river crossing. Mostyn and Jenny Thomas, who now live in Spain, arrived at the hotel and we all accompanied David down to the family ‘finca’ (farm or garden) to view the fruit and olive trees, vegetable patches, camp ground and the all important water storage and irrigation systems. The cherries and loquats were delicious. The hotel kitchen used locally grown ingredients, most of which came from the finca.

Saturday: The mini-bus took us to Puerto de La Ragua (mountain ski centre and refuge) at just over 2000m to walk on some of the mountain tops of the Sierra Nevada. We got out of the mini-bus initially on the level to take in the views and acclimatise for height, before ascending up onto a series of largely grass covered peaks called the Marrons. We had our picnic lunch and lounged in the sunshine. In the distance we could see the snow covered peaks of the highest mountain in Sierra Nevada, Mulhacen 3482m.

Sunday: We explored the foothill above Mairena village. The weather was again warm and dry, with intermittent sunshine. In fact we did not have any rain whilst on holiday for the first time in seven years! In the late afternoon the group accompanied David on a visit to the Mairena Olive Oil Press building. Even though recently refurbished the equipment and layout looked ancient and worthy as museum items. We purchased some olive oil and found it of excellent quantity. That evening the McMillan’s held a soirée in their cottage to celebrate the Dow Corning Retiree’s Association Walking Group 10th Anniversary. Sparkling wine corks popped (from the wine bodega we visited on Thursday) and crisps and nuts were scrunched in celebration

Here’s to the next trip in Gran Canaria.

Trekkers: Val Caple, Mike & Anne Dams, Peter Davies, Julia & Dave Fulford, Bob Griffiths, Margaret & Stuart McMillan, Richard & Jennie Thomas. Mostyn & Jennie Thomas joined us for 3 days.

Stuart McMillan



THE group photo, and a peaceful picnic

Memories of the 1940s

Dear Val, I have been interested in your connection to the Friends of Dyffryn Gardens as I have loved the place since I first encountered it as a schoolgirl when we wandered the fields from Barry to St Nicholas.

We were discovered peeping over the wall by the Head Gardener in the early 1940s who took us on a tour of the gardens. I remember he showed us the walled garden where he had an Espalier peach tree and also told us about the rare trees in the Arboretum. At that time the gardens were tended by German prisoners of war and not as pristine as they are now.

Then, in my teens, I spent a week in the house with the Glamorgan Youth Club – late 1940s. About 30 odd of us from all over the county – places I had never heard of – like Taibach and Cymmer. I have fond memories of the house with the beautiful ceiling and green silk wallpaper. There was a library, a music room (where I first heard 'The Dance Macabre') and a beautiful panelled billiards room. I wonder, are they all the same – I doubt it. In the gardens was a small swimming pool (now long gone) where I taught myself to swim and a tower at the end of the main lawn from which there was a beautiful view back to the house.

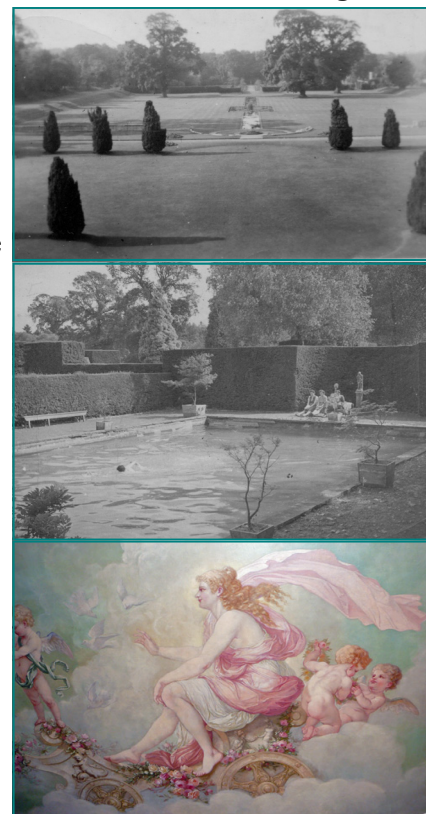
I haven't been there for years, but I retain fond memories.

Leah Manley

Dyffryn House and Gardens are now managed by the National Trust. Some of the rooms in the House have been restored using a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and it is open every afternoon except Monday or by arrangement for groups.

The Friends of Dyffryn Gardens has recently celebrated its 30 year anniversary. The aims are still to support and champion the Garden and the House and its work. We also have a year round programme of activities in Dyffryn and visits to other gardens. See www.friendsofdyffryn.org.uk

Val Caple



Memories of Dyffryn—and today

Eating in the UK in the Fifties

Olive oil was kept in the medicine cabinet

Bananas and oranges only appeared at Christmas time.

The only vegetables were spuds, peas, carrots and cabbage, anything else was regarded as being a bit suspicious.

Coke was something that we mixed with coal to make it last longer.

Rice was a milk pudding, and never, ever part of our dinner.

We bought milk and cream at the same time in the same bottle.

Tea was made in a teapot using tea leaves, not bags.

Coffee was only drunk when we had no tea - and then it was Camp, and came in a bottle.

Coconuts only appeared when the fair came to town.

Leftovers went in the dog, never in the bin, special food for dogs and cats was unheard of.

Fish and chips was always wrapped in old newspapers, and definitely tasted better that way.

Eating out was called a picnic, cooking outside was called camping.

Water came out of the tap. Anyone suggesting bottling it and charging treble would have become a laughing stock.

Campylobacter, Salmonella, E.coli, Listeria, and Botulism were all called "food poisoning".

However, the one thing that we never ever had on our table in the fifties ELBOWS

Thanks to Lynn & Roger Bennett

Residues

Many thanks to this year's contributors to Distillations—we would not have a Newsletter without you. Please send articles or photos on recent events Val Caple at any time.

Please continue to send Midsil or DC-related photos for inclusion at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dcbarry/> to Robin Pitcher. Contact him on 02920-514051 or robin.pitcher@talktalk.net

If you do not have a computer please check your local library where staff can help you get online.



Midsil TS&D Christmas Dinner 1954