

Chairman's Fraction

Oh dear - I've lasted the first quarter, swam rather than walked up some hill in the back-end of nowhere, had a delicious meal in convivial company and am looking forward to Bath in a few weeks. The meetings haven't been too bad so far either. Probably all downhill from here.

Don is going to be a hard act to follow, so I'm not going to be daft enough to try. Most of you know my background is in quality management, so my concern for the future of the Retiree's Association is going to be fitness for purpose. We've been doing a great job of walking, skittling, days out and other things, but events are getting harder to organise as potential attendees become ever fewer. That was recognised before I appeared on the scene and it's vital that we find ways to actively involve those members who chip in their subscriptions, but don't actually come along.

Having raised the topic of the elephant in the room, it's customary to deflect the attention from the leadership at this point, so I'll ask you try something in the year ahead. How about coming along to something you normally wouldn't? Can you personally invite someone to come with you to an event you'd normally be first in line for? Do you know someone who would come along if we could organise transport for them?

It's a challenge for every organisation I've ever known. Nobody has ever come up with a single, simple, solution we could copy. Please don't leave it to the committee - pelt us with ideas until we get something that works!

May the blessings of the festive season fall deep and crisp and even around you and your families.

Cheers, Bob Connell

Dow Corning Retirees Trip to Liverpool

At 9.10am on February 3rd 2014, the Edwards coach left, carrying 41 members and guests on their way to Liverpool. After a break at Webbs, near Droitwich, on boarding the coach our driver, Dave gave us "the bad news then the good news". Our intended hotel, Atlantic Towers, Thistle informed us that they had suffered a burst water tank and that we may not be able to stay at that hotel (the BAD news), but that they did have accommodation in two of their sister hotels (the GOOD news), and that they would know for definite at 3.00pm. Before we arrived at The Towers hotel, we were told that we would all be staying there (The VERY GOOD news,)

On Tuesday we left at 10.00am on a 2 hour guided Beatles Tour. Elaine, our guide, gave us a very interesting and detailed history of the Beatles lives and also about Liverpool itself. We stopped at one end of Penny Lane for a photograph stop and at the other end she showed us the various places which are mentioned within the song: the barbers, the bank, the fireman's tower and the shelter in the middle of the roundabout.

We stopped at John's aunt Mimi's house, (where he had been brought up for most of his life) and had been told by his aunt that "playing some chords on a guitar was all well and good, but you'll never make a living out of it". Next to Paul's house, where Elaine told us that on one occasion, when Paul was revisiting his old home, some enterprising young entrepreneur offered to show him, for £1, the house that Paul McCartney had once lived. Elaine didn't know if Paul paid the lad the £1, but she thought he would have. The afternoon was spent independently at the Liverpool One shopping centre, or one of the two Cathedrals in Liverpool or in one of the numerous museums around the Albert Dock.

Wednesday some guests awoke to find their room with either, cold water only, cold water in the basin but nothing from their shower or running BROWN water. We left at 9.30am to drive the 200 yards to the ferry terminal where we embarked, not onto the Titanic II, but onto a ferry named SNOWDROP. By now, we had been informed, by an excited Dave (our driver) that he had become a grandfather to a baby girl. Even though the Mersey looked quite choppy, the ride across, down and back to our starting point was very smooth. When we embarked the majority joined the coach to travel to Southport, about 15 miles north. Whilst on our way, we experienced our first rain of the holiday, unlike South Wales which had suffered continuous rain and very strong winds.

After our return, the hotel delivered a letter to all the guests to avail themselves of a complementary drink that evening, to compensate us for the lack of facilities during the morning. We arrived home on Thursday afternoon to the rain that you had been having for the previous few days!

Sue Sugden



Turkey and Tinsel trip to Looe, Cornwall

We are writing to say that this was a very enjoyable trip. We would like to thank Bob Wardle and Ken Doble for arranging this trip and Don Surridge for taking the role of the godfather for the week. 32 people attended this trip, who all got on well and helped it to be so enjoyable.

There was a quiz on the way down to Looe, which was won by Russ and Kaye Incledon. Gloria Surridge was the main joke teller on the bus and kept us amused. The first night at the hotel there was Bingo and the Barry bus won both houses. There then followed a quiz which was won by the DC Duffers (Russ and Kaye Incledon and Jim and Sue Sugden), after six tie play off.

Tuesday night was Christmas Day with Father Christmas handing out presents which were handmade chocolate pasties (not to be warmed in the microwave). This was followed by a singer and everyone had a good dance. Wednesday, which was Boxing Day a trip was arranged to a small fishing village called Charlestown and St. Austell. Charlestown, an amazingly pristine, unspoiled example of a late Georgian working port. It was constructed between 1791 and 1801 by Charles Rashleigh, entrepreneur and member of the local landowning family, in response to the growth of the growth of the local mining industry. Originally built to export copper and import coal, it was soon being used for the export of China Clay. It is from its creator that the port gets its name

Thursday was a free day, but unfortunately the weather was not very kind to us, many of us getting really wet. Thursday night was New Years evening, and the singer actually celebrated it at 10 pm, so luckily everyone was still up and a good night was had by all.

Sue Sugden



Cadoxton Ponds

On Tuesday 22nd July 2014 a group of about a dozen retirees visited the Dow Corning Eco centre with a view to a walk around the Cadoxton Ponds. We left the Eco building just after 10am. The weather was perfect, warm and sunny. The group was headed by Catherine Lewis of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. Personally it had been approx 7 years since I last visited the ponds site and I was really looking forward to the visit and to chat and catch up with past colleagues.

Catherine led us along the pathways and we overturned corrugated sheets and tarpaulins in search of grass snakes, slow worms and field mice etc. We did get a glimpse of a mouse, not sure what species it was, but you could see the "bolt holes". We also observed quite an abundance of butterflies and wild fauna. I now carry out butterfly watch etc. We also observed areas where pond dipping is carried out by school children for observations of pond life etc (takes me back to jam jars with string on, cane handle nets and tadpoles)

The most striking feeling that you get when walking around is the peace and tranquillity of the area, considering you are in a large town and adjacent to a huge chemical plant it's quite extraordinary.

We eventually returned to the Eco centre for a welcome cold drink (not beer I might add). Catherine then gave a very interesting presentation on Welsh Beaver re-introduction. A very relaxing and interesting 2 hours was enjoyed by all.

Many thanks to Robert for organising and Catherine for the very informative tour and presentation. Look forward to a repeat next year!!

Clarence Davy



Skittles

A skittles evening was held on Saturday, 25th October. We only had 18 members attend, but all who came enjoyed themselves and a good night was had by all. The next skittle evening will be a Christmas night to be held on Saturday, 13th December. Hopefully we will have a few more join us.

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

Spring Dinner

Forty eight guests dined on a very wet Saturday evening. Several guests cancelled because of illness, also an injury that prevented two members travelling plus a member who had reserved four places had been hospitalised several days before and remained in hospital on the night.

Feed back was that the dinner was excellent, as was the entertainment and the evening as a whole. My thanks to Ruth Beasley who took on the task of organising the raffle prizes which was more than appreciated.

Derek Butler - Social Committee



Excerpts from the Captain's Log – Gran Canaria

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

One of the Canary Islands, Gran Canaria is only 600 square miles, but has lush forests, exotic fauna and flora, Sahara like dunes and mountains. It provided some spectacular walking with high ridges and volcanic peaks, deep ravines, palm groves and ancient cave dwellings to explore. The majority of the walks we undertook were supported by map and compass, Robin's GPS (new and old) and Mike's Junior 'Ped'.

We were staying at the Parador Hotel at Cruz de Tejeda which at 1510m has extensive views over the mountains and across to Tenerife some 125 km away. It included a luxurious Spa with a pool, jacuzzi, sauna, etc. plus treatments to relax in after a hard days walking.

Monday. We assembled at Cardiff airport at 0600 hrs - no security issues to report this year! A luxury mini-bus took us from Las Palmas airport up into the mountainous centre of the island via small villages, twisting roads and stunning views. At the hotel we had our first taste of the Canarian cooking. Most chose 'Elbow of Pork' for the main course – it was huge. The hotel menu did not change during our stay, but interestingly the presentation of the same meal varied greatly day by day depending on which cook/chef was on duty.

Tuesday. We piled into the mini-bus and our driver for the week, Sergio, drove us to a forest area with the bar/restaurant 'Las Cumbres' as our start and finish point. We walked down a steep path into a valley and then set off on a contour path in a great curve around the 'barranco' (valley) before climbing up to a superb viewpoint. In the next valley, with Robin out front 'leading the way with his GPS' (the wrong way), we had help from a local and eventually reached the highest peak of the island (1960m) with two ice wells that used to supply ice to before electricity and fridges. After a downhill stretch through the forests we were back to our start point. Not many cake shops on this trip, but most walks finished at a bar with ice-cold beers, thank goodness.

Wednesday. Sergio took the mini-bus on some very twisty, zig-zag, hair-pinned roads that were cut into the rock face in some places. The scenery was stunning – towering mountains, little white-washed villages, forests, banana plantations, potato fields on steeply rising terraces, huge rocks pointing skywards, huge drops off the road! We walked out of San Bartolome down into a fertile valley and through Santa Lucia, before dropping down into the valley again where we found timber shacks and tree-houses built by hippies. We needed to press on up the steep hill towards Fataga. It was hot (29C) and airless in the valley and there was infrequent shade under isolated trees. After the final climb we could see our destination ahead and started the steep descent into Fataga and a well deserved beer.

Thursday. After watching the low flying clouds scud over the hotel we took the mini-bus to Ayacata. We climbed up to the iconic Roque Nublo (1808m) and its breathtaking views before descending to a reservoir dam and onwards into pine forests. Eventually we completed a huge semi-circular contour path to overlook Las Lagunetas and a short road walk to Las Rosas, another bar/restaurant oasis at the end of the walk.

Friday. We walked from the hotel, across the road and up into some good paths all off road with good views, welcome shade and a lot more down than up for a change. The route was part of the 'Camino de Santiago' and path with a descended 600m on well constructed but cobbled path which was a test for all walkers, some complaining of 'knackered knee caps'. We reached the bottom of the first stage at Cruz Grande before another 400m descent to San Bartolome. We created confusion by ordering 20 glasses of beer and 10 ice creams—the owner was concerned that we were not going to pay, but we could not have run away even if we wanted to!



Saturday. Today's walk was around the religious town of Teror, setting off from the gates of a beautiful park called Finca Osario, named after the mountain we were going to climb. We pressed on up through lush greenery until we made our way onto Pico Osario (968m), but the views were lost in the low flying cloud and the high upgrowth. We trekked along roads before arriving at Balcon de Zamora's ancient wash house. Another steep concrete road and a never ending dirt track descended into a valley with restored Canarian cottages near a river bridge. We re-entered Teror where the local Red Cross was holding a huge fund-raising event and all traffic was banned, so we found a bar while waiting for Sergio to come and pick us up.



Sunday. We had a leisurely day returning to Las Cumbres bar/restaurant, having a coffee and a leisurely lunch and finishing up with liquors. Some of us had booked a full massage in the Spa to relax our muscles—it was needed!

Monday. Early breakfast before the luxury mini-bus took us down to Las Palmas airport and home.

The Gran Canarian holiday was voted our best yet. We completed six walks, with a total of 57 miles and 3201m of ascent. We did not have any rain whilst on holiday for the second time in eight years.

Stuart McMillan

Use of the DC Gym

Following a request made at the September DCRA meeting that retiree spouses be allowed to use the DC gym, Robin Pitcher met with Brian Austin (site mgr) and Vicky Edwards (HR mgr) to discuss this issue. Brian said that they were prepared to make the facility available for the use of retirees AND their spouses subject to the following condition:

- Spouses will only be able to participate in organised classes.
- Spouses will not be able to use the gym equipment. (This is to ensure that there is a responsible person in attendance at all times).

Anyone interested in using the gym in this way should contact Johanne Stacey at Dow Corning. Johanne will organise a safety and security induction as she does for other retirees and ask them to sign an agreement. Gym manager Sarah Cayton will then issue an access fob and arrange car park access based on car registration

Current classes include Circuits, Bootcamp, Metafit, Kettlefit, BoxFit, Mind & Body, Cardio bands, Kettlercise, and Pilates. Zamba might be reintroduced if enough were interested.

For more information on any classes, please contact:

Sarah Cayton at sarah.cayton@dowcorning.com or 07943825499

Perks of reaching over 60 and heading towards 70!

1. No one expects you to run--anywhere.
2. There is nothing left to learn the hard way.
3. Things you buy now won't wear out.
4. You can live without sex but not your glasses.
5. You quit trying to hold your stomach no matter who walks into the room.
6. Your eyes won't get much worse.
7. Your investment in health insurance is finally beginning to pay off.
8. Your joints are more accurate meteorologists than the weather service.
9. Your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either.
10. Your supply of brain cells is finally down to manageable size.

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 to Val Caple.

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.

