



Learn,
Laugh, Live

Pier Views — June 2024

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From the chair

It is that time of the year again, the AGM!

You will all by now have had an opportunity to receive the paperwork as it has been in the bulletin for at least the last three weeks, the necessary forms, accounts etc.

The AGM is a brief meeting to accept the accounts and to hear what we have been up to during the past year, but most importantly to elect the committee for the coming year 24/25.

We must have 15% of the membership present for the meeting to go ahead, failing that we must repeat the exercise until we have the correct number of people there. Please do not assume that there will be enough people present without you, your attendance might just be the crucial difference between having the meeting quorate or not.

See you there!

Following the meeting, there will be a short presentation by the 'Their Finest Hour' team followed by one of the remarkable stories that they uncovered.

I can tell you now that you will not want to miss that.

See you there!

Iain

The Tower of London

On the 25th April 2024, members and guests of Bognoru3a were given a talk by Alan Kingshott on his time as a Yeoman Warder and the history of the Tower of London.

Alan commenced his talk with a summary of his own life and how he eventually ended up in the Tower, for all the right reasons of course. He was born in 1952 in Newhaven, Sussex. He joined the army when he was 15 and was posted the Bovington Camp, Wareham, Dorset. He said that he went home after three months, only to find his parents had moved home.

At the age of 18, in 1970, he joined the regular army and became a tank gunner in the Royal Hussars. He said that he met his wife, initially via a blind date at which he was stood up, but he eventually married Pat in 1974 and they will be celebrating 50 years of marriage this year. Alan served in many countries, including Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Middle and Far East and Germany. He gained several promotions and eventually reached the rank of Warrant Officer, ably assisted by his wife Pat. In 1992, 25 years after joining the army Alan left and had various jobs, before becoming a retail manager for Comet and one of the shops he managed was in Bognor Regis.

In 1997 he received a letter from a former Army colleague, who was Yeoman Warder at the Tower of London, inviting Alan and his wife to spend the weekend with his family at the Tower. It was during this time that Alan got his first taste of life as Yeoman Warder and found out that applications were to be issued for posts at the Tower. He applied and in 1998, was recruited as Yeoman Warder. In 2004 Alan was promoted to Yeoman Sargeant and subsequently successfully applied for promotion to Yeoman Gaoler and in 2012 was promoted to Chief Yeoman Warder, the top job. His wife Pat, for many years, worked with and became an expert in The Crown Jewels. Living accommodation for Alan and his family was on the top floor of The Byward Tower and consisted of 3 bedrooms, a toilet with no natural light, which confused visitors if the light bulb failed, a living room, dressing room and kitchen. This accommodation was accessed by 47 stairs, so carrying shopping etc up became somewhat difficult at times and particularly if you forgot something.

The Tower was commissioned by William the Conqueror, following his success the Battle of Hastings and was one of many castles he had built around England. The Tower on London was built over the ruins of a Roman Fort and took 25 years to complete. Many of the stone masons came from France and they brought with them stone from Caen, but most of the actual labour was provided by Englishmen.

In 1220 an Inner Defensive wall was built, with thirteen towers and eventually followed by the building an Outer Defensive wall with six towers and then a Moat was added, which was 120 feet wide and 15 feet deep. Unfortunately, the moat became the dumping ground for many Londoners rubbish and soon become known as the largest cesspit in London.

In 1843 the Duke of Wellington made use of the tower as a storage facility for Coins and the Crown Jewels, as an Armoury and a Prison.

Within the tower grounds there are various stone sculptors of wild animals. This reflects the time when reigning Monarchs were given gifts of wild animals, which were initially kept at the tower, However, in 1835, all these animals were transferred to Regents Park, which became and still is London Zoo.

Henry 8th greeted Anne Boleyn as his Queen to the Tower. However, next time she came to the Tower was via Traitors Gate to her execution. Traitors Gate was previously known as Watergate, so we invented the term! Other famous persons to have come through the Traitors Gate are Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey. One Monarch who came to the Tower and left alive after 41 years was Elizabeth Tudor. Walter Raleigh was incarcerated in the Tower. The Tower was a Royal Residence for 500 years and also has Dungeons and a Torture Chamber.

It is said that if the ravens leave the Tower grounds, it will signal the end of the Monarchy. In order to ensure this does not occur, if even true, the ravens have their flight feathers trimmed. A flock of ravens is commonly known as an Un-kindness.

There was a raven called Merlin, but it was found that he was actually a female and now called Merlina.

One day the Ravenmaster asked Alan to assist in trimming their flight feathers, as this is done every 3 to 4 months, but unfortunately it did not quite go to plan and Alan ended up getting bitten on the lip. It made him raving mad!

New ravens used to be purchased from registered breeders, however, in recent years this has become more difficult, so a decision was made to breed ravens at the Tower. In order to do so an Aviary was built, which allowed the ravens to fly and perform their natural habits and in 2021 four ravens were born.

The Tower has held 3556 prisoners.

There were three types of execution:

- Beheading

- Burning at the stake

- Hanged, Drawn and Quartered.

The last execution took place in 1747, however, it was subsequently used to execute German Prisoners of War by firing squad in WW11.

Beheadings took place on Tower Hill, Burnings at the stake at Smithfield and Hangings at Tyburn – now Marble Arch.

Executioners were generally recruited from the butchery trade, for obvious reasons and use a block and Axe to perform their duties.

People to be executed in this manner would often offer the executioner payment to be quick and exact. This is where the term Severance Pay is said to have been derived.

The only known execution where an axe was not used is the execution of Anne Boleyn, who requested a sword be used.

The Chapel Royal of St. Peter Ad Vincula was the place of burial of some of the most famous prisoners and in 1876 during renovations burials were found and the most important ones which could be identified were Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey. Their remains were reburied under a marble pavement and inscribed with their names and coats of arms.

Anyone who is christened within the Tower is automatically allowed to get married in the Tower grounds. Alan said that all his children were christened within the Tower, even though one of them was not born there, likewise with his granddaughter.

The Towers organ had to be replaced at a cost of £350 thousand pounds and came from Canada.

Are the Crown Jewels real – Yes, they are, but often Silver Gilt was used as it is a harder metal.

During Oliver Cromwell's time, he had the jewels melted down. However, when the Restoration of the Monarchy took place, new jewels were created. To do this, images were taken from royal portraits to recreate the jewels as accurately as possible.

How do you qualify to become a Yeoman at the Tower:

22 years military service

Rank of at least Sargeant Major

Long service/good conduct,

There are different types of uniform worn:

Blue undress uniform

State Dress uniform

The latter takes about 20 minutes to put on has not very pleasant red tights and requires the wearing of a suspender belt.

The Yeomans Tower duties include attending Gun salutes, of which there are many, eg Royal birthdays/funerals and welcome events and this when they wear the State Dress uniform.

Other interesting ceremonies that take place at the Tower:

Beating the Bounds – this is when children are led by the Beefeaters around the streets, beating boundary stones with willow sticks. It is said that in olden days they used to beat the children. This is otherwise known as Beat the Markers.

The Ceremony of the Keys – This is when the yeoman Warders perform the duty of locking the Tower every night.

Escort duties within the Tower grounds – Whenever royalty visit the Tower, the Warders perform escort duties.

The Poppy Field – this took six months to display, but only two weeks to remove. When members of the Royal family came to view the poppies, the now Princess of Wales spoke to Alan and he introduced her to his wife and granddaughter.

Alan finished his talk by talking about his medals:

General Service medal – 1974,1976 and 1978

UN Cyprus 1970/71

Golden Jubilee

Diamond Jubilee

Long Service and Good conduct medal

Sultan of Oman 15-year peace 1984/88

In 2017 Alan was awarded the Member of the Royal Victorian Order in the New Years Honours list and it was presented to him by the now King Charles 111

There then followed a short Q&A session:

What sort of questions do you get asked on the Tower tours:

What river is Tower Bridge on.

Do the Traitors gate steps go up and down.

Other questions from the audience:

Do the Warders pay rent for the accommodation - yes
and all the usual other utility costs.

Do the Warders drink Beefeater Gin – yes and we get
a bottle on our birthday.

Have the Crown Jewels ever been stolen – yes, but were found in 1571.

Alan added that the Crown Jewels must never leave UK's shores. In WW11 they were sent to Windsor Castle and if the enemy ever got close, they would be moved to similar locations around the UK.

Are there ghosts at the Tower – Alan said his Granddaughter thought so, but we suspect it was their son checking on his daughter.

He finished with a story about the Night time tour they used to do, when a pungent smell was coming from the White Tower. The source was never identified, but it was thought it came from vermin traps set around the grounds.

Alan was thanked by Julie for his brilliant and entertaining talk.



Table Tennis Group

The occasion was Maureen McMillans 90th birthday on 27th February this year who is a member of my table tennis group held on a monday afternoon. On behalf of my group, I presented a bouquet of flowers and a signed birthday card signed by her friends in my group.

Maggie Williams



WALKING FOR HEALTH AND FITNESS

Our group meets twice a month on a Wednesday morning, from the Prom opposite the Waverly Pub. We leave at 10 am prompt. Dates are published in the Bulletin.

I am sure you are all aware of our Distance Walking group, which will take you over the downs by public footpath or around our beautiful coastline. These walks are between 4 and 6 miles over what can be muddy terrain. Our group came about when I received a message from our Chairman Iain Paillot saying that he had read a note somewhere "that being able to walk 3 miles in under an hour " was beneficial to us seniors.

I thought about this statement and thought that for us on the coast it was a great idea. I offered to lead this group and set about researching what we could do. I thought that as we have our wonderful prom which is traffic free, flat and wide. Perfect for this type of walk. I started at the Waverly Pub and began to walk east-erly for 30 minutes noting each 10 minute point. The Pier being point 1, Gloucester Road being point 2 and the Lobster Pot being point 3. This was working out just fine.

Our walkers are able to chat socially whilst walking and as we are on a public path feel able to walk as far as they wish in safety. Currently Southern Water have re arranged our walk by locating 2 large pipes across the promenade where the rife meets the sea. We now divert through Longbrook Park and get to the Lobster Pot by the road, until the pipes are removed.

Should bad weather make the prom difficult we have a number of options around Aldwick and West Bognor.

Do come and join us.

Mike Shawyer

Group Leader

Supper Club

Supper Club members enjoying a meal at The Boundary Restaurant in the Middleton Sports Club





Crime and Punishment Group

Tuesday 14th May was the seventh and final meeting of a group that has been meeting fortnightly discussing a broad spectrum of the issues raised through the workings of the criminal justice system. The purpose and effectiveness of sentencing; the theories of punishment; the workings of the police, prison and probation services and the training and efficacy of judges and magistrates.

Victims of crime and the families of victims and perpetrators. Are their needs identified and met? Do we fully utilise the potential in the community and voluntary sector in our responses to criminal behaviour?

We looked too at the politics of crime and punishment and then finally we have examined capital punishment from the perspective that there is more to the death penalty than being for it or against it.



Flower Arranging Group

Jam Jar decorating









Parallel flower decor



Trip to the Netherlands

Everything went smoothly until we got to Dover. The first of our encounters with a Brexit benefit! We filed through French immigration in total silence as per the instruction notices on the wall then into the coach 'shed' for British customs and passport control. They were training a new team, what could possibly go wrong? We would find out later but, in the meantime, cases were selected randomly and passed through an airport-style x-ray machine to see that we were not carrying anything we should not have been. Then on to the final check-in before being allocated our loading lane.

We were a group of 29 including the driver but somehow the system had recorded 31 passports. To say that this took time to reconcile would be an understatement.

Our ferry arrived and we watched in wonderment as truck after truck disembarked, apparently this new ship, the Liberation, can take 180 of these monsters.

But what a lovely vessel, clean, comfortable and surprising very few 'rug rats' chasing up and down. The sea was like a mill pond and the crossing was quick [ish] and we were on the road in France by 13.20. The four star Berghotel est. 1905 looked to be very good but looks can be deceiving as we would discover.

The town of Amersfoort is probably best known as the birthplace of Piet Mondrian with a reproduction of his best-known work in the hotel's reception area.

Our first full day was a celebration of a birthday, a chorus of Happy Birthday, a card and a cake? In the evening, but we were headed to Gouda, for a guided walk around this important medieval town. Afternoon to Keukenhof, an interesting visit but the bulbs were very much past their best and the gardens closed the day after we were there for the season. Indoors the plants were magnificent, my Canna lilies never look like that, and the Dutch apple cake and coffee were equally good.

The next day was a canal cruise in Utrecht having the history of the town explained to us by our two guides who, of course, spoke perfect English. In the afternoon we visited the Castle de Haar was built in the mid-C19th on the site of an earlier C15th castle, it is richly decorated inside and surrounded by beautiful parkland and gardens.

The third day took us first to Oosterbeek and the Airborne Museum and then into Arnhem to view 'the bridge too far' now of course much rebuilt and named the John Frost Bridge in honour of the commanding officer of the Paratroops.

The afternoon was to 'Het Loo' the Versailles of the Netherlands near Apeldoorn. Built in the late C17th for King Willem III and his consort Princess Mary in a Dutch Baroque style it was used by the royal house of Orange-Nassau until the 1960s. Now a museum it tells the story of the Orange-Nassau family and it helped explain a great deal of English history of the C17th and early C18th. Outside the gardens are laid out in the English fashion and with walks and water features to entertain the visitor. The view from the roof terrace was very impressive.

The less said about our return trip the better. Suffice it to say that having arrived at Calais at 13.30 we did not leave until 17.35 and as the summer goes on the waits can only get longer and longer.

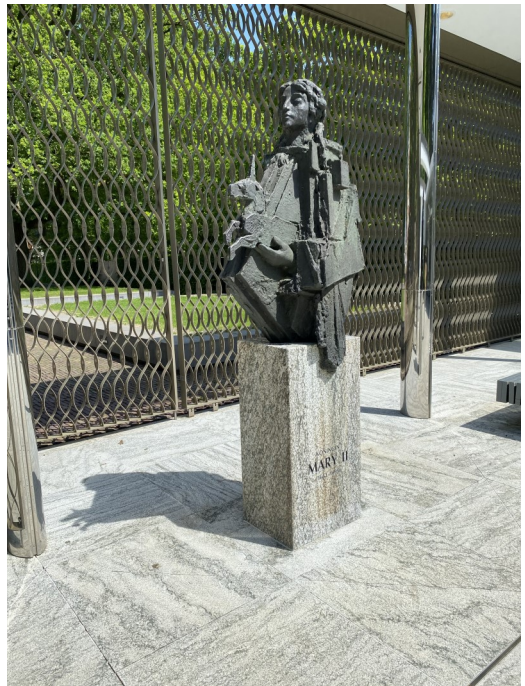
All in all though it was a good trip, the days were packed and I shall need to take into consideration the amount of walking my u3a clients can do without seriously flagging. I think I pushed it this time! Sorry.....

I have deliberately left out the tales from the hotel but people are still dining out on their experiences, but do ask and they will be delighted, I am sure, to recount them in all their gory detail.



Brexit benefit??

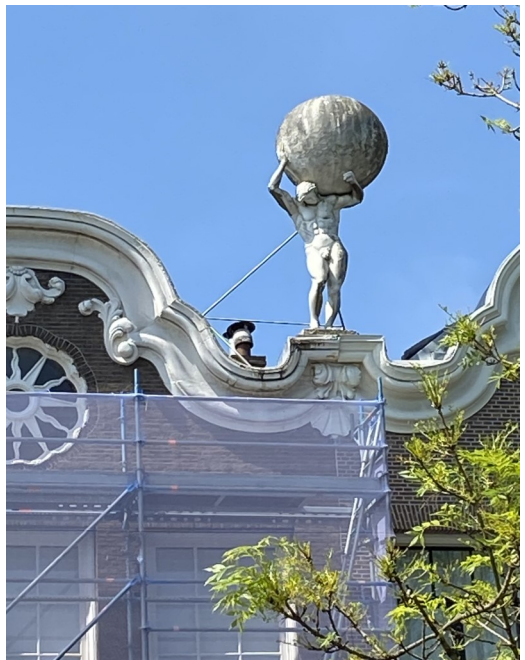
William's wife Mary





William of Orange

Ever seen Beckham
take a throw in?



Castle de Haar



Memorial outside Airborne Museum at Oosterbeek





Utrecht Cathedral

Flowers for Mother's Day



The Dom, Utrecht

