

KierLink

The magazine for the Kier Fellowship Trust | Issue 39 | Autumn/Winter 2019



MESSAGE FROM THE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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DUNCAN VALENTINE BRAND
1941-30 JULY 2019
PAGE 6

MY CAMINO FRANCÉS...
BY JEFF TAYLOR
PAGES 30-32



STOP PRESS

The next National Golf Day is at St. Neots Golf Club on 27 August 2020.
Get the date on your diary! Full details to follow.



Neil Meixner

Chairman’s matters and Administrator’s report

I’m sure many of our readers share our disappointment that it was necessary to cancel this year’s Garden Party due to circumstances beyond our control. We, and other Trustees, are exploring ideas about the feasibility of holding next year’s event at a new venue. The Garden Party has always been our flagship event of the year and every effort will be made to find a suitable location in the Tempsford area.

It is worth mentioning that our 12 areas have a full calendar of events planned for the year, so please either contact your area organiser or check our website for further details.

Please do take part and support the great events being organised on your behalf in your area and beyond. You can find further information on the Fellowship at: www.fellowship.kier.co.uk

The site includes a home page, membership invitation page, calendar of events, contacts page, blog, gallery of photographs from events and even all the previous issues of KierLink. You can add event reports and photographs by sending them to Andrea McDaid at: kierfellowship@gmail.com

We have received some excellent articles from members for inclusion in this KierLink magazine but, as always, we are seeking interesting items for inclusion in future editions. If you have been on a memorable holiday, celebrated a special event or perhaps a reunion with old work colleagues from the past, please contact any member of the editorial team namely, Andrea McDaid, Neil Meixner or Brendan O’Boyle and we will be pleased to assist you (**email address kierlinkmag@gmail.com**).

Interest in the Trust remains strong with new members joining from most divisions of the company. Membership is currently standing at 1,350 compared with 1,327 this time last year.



Brendan O’Boyle

In order to clarify recent confusion amongst members, please note that members can re-join the Kier Rewards Scheme by contacting their area organiser or Brendan O’Boyle with their full name, date of birth, email address and National Insurance number so that central Trust records can be updated first.

The information will then be passed to the Rewards Team on the first of each month for loading live on the system. Once you’ve notified us it may take time to go live so please bear with us.

Please make sure that if you change your address you give your new address to your area organiser and Brendan O’Boyle so that our records can be updated and you can continue to receive invitations to the events and copies of KierLink magazine. It is helpful to have any new telephone number too.

If you require help or information with any matters relating to the Kier Group Fellowship Trust, please contact Brendan O’Boyle by email as shown below:

brendan.o’boyle.ext@kier.co.uk

Regards Neil & Brendan

Editor’s note

Dear Fellowship members. What another amazing issue of KierLink! You are so inspiring! I have thoroughly enjoyed reading what you’ve been up to and it’s such a pleasure for me to put this newsletter together.

As you can see, I’ve changed my photo. My mum, sister and I holidayed in Alvor, Portugal in May and I achieved my life-time ambition of swimming with dolphins. I can’t tell you what a wonderful experience it was and in the next issue I will write an article to share my experience with you. Admittedly, not challenging like Jeff Taylor’s Camino Francés adventure! Congratulations Jeff!

Also, congratulations go to Tony Norman who celebrated his 80th birthday this year. Tony writes his about ‘Marriott X1’ career from 1964-1995. Tony worked alongside John Marriott – relation of Robert Marriott who founded the company in 1890. In our next issue John will be gracing us with an article on his career which I’ve no doubt will be just as fascinating!

I hope you all enjoy reading issue 39 and thanks once again for all your contributions.

Best wishes, Andrea



Andrea McDaid

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COVER PHOTO:
HEADING OUT FROM ORISSON,
JEFF TAYLOR (MAPLE CROSS)
ACHIEVES A MIGHTY JOURNEY OF
A 490-MILE WALK ACROSS
NORTHERN SPAIN ON HIS OWN!



Copy deadline for Spring/Summer 2020 issue:

**MONDAY
27 JANUARY**

Email kierlinkmag@gmail.com

Message from the Chief Executive

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Kier Link. I'm Andrew Davies, Chief Executive of Kier Group. I joined in April this year and I'm delighted to be part of Kier.

Kier has established market-leading positions by developing long-term client relationships and delivering excellent client service. It has a long history of reliable and solid performance.

However, I am joining the company at a time when it is facing significant challenges as reflected in the share price.

Since I joined, I have begun to take immediate steps to address these challenges, specifically focusing on three key areas.

Firstly, we will simplify the Group. We are reviewing how we operate as a business, so we can become more efficient, productive and profitable.

We will improve our cash flow. Cash is key and fundamental to the smooth running of a business.

Thirdly, we need to reduce our net debt and strengthen our balance sheet.

I'm pleased to say we are taking action on these priorities. I launched a strategic review of the Group, which looked at how we are structured as a business, and we announced the conclusions of the review in mid-June.

These conclusions have confirmed that the Group will be focused on our construction, infrastructure, utilities, and highways businesses. These are high-quality, market-leading businesses with long-term contracts. They generate sustainable revenues and margins, and are highly valued by our clients and customers.

We will also retain our housing maintenance and Middle East construction businesses.

To help achieve our strategic goals and particularly our working capital requirements, we will simplify our portfolio by selling and

exiting non-core activities including Kier Living (our residential business), facilities management and environmental services, and reducing investment in our property business.

Other actions we are taking include rightsizing the Group and reducing our headcount in the corporate centre. To further help our position, we have confirmed that the Board is suspending dividend payments to FY2019 and FY2020.

I appreciate that this news, particularly the decision to suspend dividend payments, is unsettling to many of you who own Kier shares. It was a difficult decision to make, but it's important we take decisive action at this juncture. These actions are aimed to reset our operations, reduce our cost base, simplify our structure, and generate cash to reduce our debt and remain commercially successful.

In our trading update in August, we announced we are making good progress in reducing our net debt, and we have also received significant interest in Kier Living, following the start of the sale process. Our underlying business is solid, and we continue to deliver high-quality work and secure new contracts from our clients.

Everything we are doing is to improve the Group's financial health for the benefit of our employees, shareholders, and stakeholders.

We look forward to updating our investors when we report our full-year results on 19 September.

*As always,
thank you for
your continued
support and
interest in Kier.*



Andrew Davies

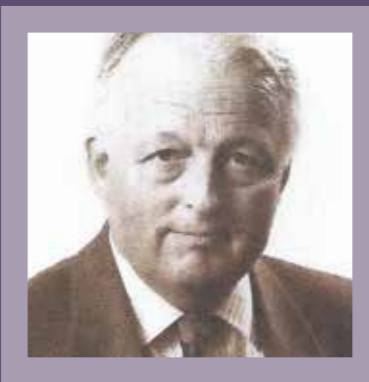
A warm welcome to the following new members

Name	City/town	Area	Worked for	Years of service
Rodger Anderson	Carnoustie, Angus	Tempsford	Kier International	16
Ian Barber	Ipswich, Suffolk	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	12
Kevin Byrne	Harpenden, Herts	Maple Cross	Kier Southern	19
Kate Cooper	Biggleswade, Beds	Tempsford	Kier Ltd	10
James Cox	Wisbech, Cambs	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	18
Robert Duxfield	Winchester, Hants	Solent	Kier M&E	35
Andrew Filmer	West Malling, Kent	Maidstone	Kier Southern	14
Jane Goddard	Havant, Hants	Solent	Kier Southern	47
Joan Hillcock	West Kingsdown, Kent	Maidstone	Kier Southern	3
Peter Kavanagh	Liverpool, Lancs	Liverpool	Kier North West	20
Peter Laskowski	Chesterfield, Derbyshire	Leeds	Kier Northern	29
David Lattimer	Waterlooville, Hants	Solent	Kier Utilities	3
David Loasby	Midhurst, West Sussex	Solent	Kier Southern	11
Kirsten McCormick	Bootle, Liverpool	Liverpool	Kier Ltd	12
Alasdair McFarlan	Edinburgh	Tempsford	Kier Scotland	13
Stephen Marshall	Sheffield, Yorkshire	Leeds	Kier Northern	22
Tony Mattock	Sutton Coalfield, Birmingham	Central	Kier Highways	29
Kate Moore	Liverpool, Lancs	Liverpool	Kier Ltd	14
Alison Mungo	Huyton, Liverpool, Lancs	Liverpool	Kier Ltd	30
Diane Nunn	Great Yarmouth, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier Highways	31
Robert Parry	Cwmbran, Torfaen	Bristol	Kier Western	43
Stephen Peat	Swadlincote, Derbyshire	Rushden	Kier Mining	24
Michael Phipps	Hereford, Herefordshire	Central	Kier Central	38
David Rayner	Chatteris, Cambs	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	27
David Reilly	Berkhamstead, Herts	Tempsford	Kier Construction	18
Philip Robinson	Kings Lynn, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	16
Philip Shepherd	Lancaster, Lancs	Liverpool	Kier North West	25
Sheila Simonds	St. Neots, Cambs	Tempsford	Kier Group	23
Julian Smith	Wimborne, Dorset	Solent	Kier Southern	22
Janet Waldock	Eaton Socon, Cambs	Tempsford	Kier Contracting Ltd	12
Barry Walklate	Rushden, Northants	Rushden	Kier Major Projects	22

Duncan Valentine Brand...

(St Valentine's Day, 1941-30 July 2019)

Duncan was the second son of Charles Gordon Brand & Joan Russell, born in Crowborough, Sussex – his mother having moved out of London to avoid the Blitz. Duncan had a classics education at Oxford University and then followed on to be trained as a Chartered Accountant. He took articles at Charles Brand & Son's audit firm.



Following qualification and after two years, in 1968 Duncan joined the family civil engineering firm, Charles Brand & Son, as a site accountant on the Severn-Wye tunnel contract in the business founded by his great-great-grandfather.

Charles Brand & Son was working tunnels for the London Victoria tube line at the time when it was taken over by JL Kier & Co in 1971. Duncan transferred to Kier's head office in Bedfordshire. His career path zigzagged over 20 years through successive manifestations of the Group: from Kier via W&C French, French Kier Products & Services, Beazer Products & Services, Beazer Construction, Hanson; until one fine day the opportunity arose to join with three other like-minded colleagues to mount a buy-out on a basis designed

to give long-term stability to a sorely troubled business by harnessing the skills & commitment of its staff and offering them all a stake in the project.

It was on 3 July 1992 that the new Kier Group was born. The company floated on the stock market with Duncan as its Finance Director (FD). His role in this action was significant. The early financial stability was a hallmark of the Group's footprint which Duncan and his team encouraged and reported.

Duncan worked hard to produce stability. He appreciated words and he had the linguistic ability to make them be understood and he made time to help others. He served as Chairman for both the Kier pension fund and newly formed Fellowship Trust.

Duncan retired as Kier Group FD in 2001. In the words of his great-grandfather James, he planned: "To amuse himself and prevented time from hanging heavy on his hands." He was an excellent skier, loved sailing, supported charities, learned Italian and was a well-read learned amusing gentleman. His family were very close to him and when Hilary, his dearest wife passed away a few years ago, his daughter Rosie and two sons, Edward and Jeremy, with their six children were drawn closer to him – his heart and support was deservedly forthcoming.

We all thank Duncan for his efforts.

Obituaries

Our thoughts are with the loved ones of those who have passed away.

Barbara Andrews	05/02/2019	Zena Holland	12/06/2019
Alan Bartlett	19/01/2019	Elaine Jones	05/03/2019
Ann Bower	05/07/2019	Spencer Keith	10/05/2019
Wilfred Bowyer	12/03/2019	Joyce Livermore	22/02/2019
Timothy Boyle	31/03/2019	Michael McKeown	27/03/2019
Duncan Brand	30/07/2019	Malcolm Mason	21/04/2019
Ian Burnell	16/02/2019	Margaret Miller	07/06/2019
June Cake	16/05/2019	Terence O'Hare	18/07/2019
Leonard Collins	14/06/2019	Richard Pembroly	30/04/2019
Adrian Cook	TBA	Michael Portsmouth	23/05/2019
Violet Coombes	15/07/2019	Keith Rann	14/03/2019
Marjorie Crosthwaite	14/05/2019	Anthony Reeder	22/05/2019
Margaret Cussans	31/03/2019	William Richards	02/07/2019
Gordon Davies	06/03/2019	Andrew Rolland	08/03/2019
Charles Dean	06/04/2019	Jack Seymour	20/03/2019
Kazimierz Dedynski	07/03/2019	John Swallow	26/06/2019
Ladislaus Fernando	18/07/2019	Denis Tarrant	06/06/2019
Richard Fogg	31/03/2019	John Thomas	21/05/2019
Betty Fox	05/05/2019	Jacqueline Towler	11/05/2019
Ronald Gigg	01/08/2018	John Walstow	19/03/2019
Mary Goose	11/07/2019	David Webb	05/03/2019
Sidney Graham	29/03/2019	James Williams	14/06/2019

Around the regions

Bristol and Newport



Members outside the British Aerospace Museum, Filton

Our 2019 programme started with an excellent visit to the British Aerospace Museum at Filton at the end of February. Although we were able to have an early 'sneak preview' site visit to Concorde there two years ago – just after the plane had been positioned in the new Kier-built hangar – we were delighted with the completed museum.



New hanger

Members spent hours, firstly at and in Concorde and its associated excellent exhibits, and then looking at the large museum of aircraft, cars, tools, etc, many dating from WW1 with others right through to modern helicopters and guided missiles. During this memorable day the 18 of us also met for lunch in the cafe.

In late March we returned for our annual lunch at Tortworth Court, just north of Bristol. The large Victorian Mansion built in Tudor style between 1848 and 1853 by Lord Ducie has lovely grounds and trees. Having to sign a four-page small print contract to book the lunch seemed rather excessive! The somewhat indifferent meal was, however, much



Concorde cockpit

enjoyed because of the congenial company of the 27 attending members and the fine surroundings. After lunch the lovely weather allowed a stroll in the gardens.



Tortworth Court



Members lunch at Tortworth Court

The intended visit to Sudeley Castle, near Cheltenham in early June ran into booking difficulties so we instead met again back near Newport at The Old Barn Inn. After a chat and a drink in the bar, we had a most enjoyable meal. We again had an excellent turnout of 28 members who appreciated the good food and service at this small hotel.



Members lunch at The Old Barn Inn

The visit to Sudeley Castle – once the home and now the resting place of Henry V111's last and surviving wife, Katherine Parr – was re-arranged and held in wonderful weather in July. After being welcomed by the staff we grouped together, asking another visitor if he would kindly take a group photograph. What a coincidence, our 'photographer' turned out to be a KFT member visiting from another region! After having tea/coffee and biscuits in the cafe, the 18 of



Group photo in the grounds of Sudeley Castle

us were fascinated with all the historical displays and artefacts including the 'Six Wives' Exhibition, set within the 15th century West Wing. We were then able to visit other re-built areas now used as a private house, together with the chapel and Queen Catherine's tomb. Our informative and fascinating visit was rounded off in the extensive grounds which have well-kept formal gardens, clipped hedges and flower borders. A most enjoyable visit in the Cotswolds.



Sudeley Castle grounds



Sudeley Castle artefacts



Queen Catherine's tomb

Our late summer and autumn programme, to include tours in Bristol and a further meal, is being finalised.

David Priddis

Central

The Fleet Inn: 05/02/19

Our first get together of the year was at The Fleet Inn, Twynning, when 28 of us met to have lunch and chat over some suggestions for outings during the coming year. A long list of suggestions was enthusiastically received, so many in fact that we will have to wait until 2020 to achieve some of them! A good lunch and catch up was enjoyed by all.

Bristol Aerospace Concorde Museum: 14/03/19

Twenty-eight members visited Aerospace Bristol. This museum of the Bristol Aircraft Company includes an interesting display of aircraft through the 20th century and also gives access to the last Concorde aircraft to be built. We enjoyed a very informative guided tour which was entertaining and nostalgic. Lunch in the museum's own cafe was enjoyed by all.

Bletchley Park: 08/05/19

Eighteen of us met for coffee at Bletchley Park before we enjoyed a talk and guided tour of the buildings involved in this amazing place. There was so much to see and much of it reminded us of family conversations about the War in our childhood.

The tour was valiantly endured by us and the guide while the rain poured down and the temperature dropped dramatically. Those who had left home in summer sunshine and had dressed appropriately resembled 'drowned rats' afterwards! Despite the rain the outing was enjoyed by everyone.

Chavanage House, Tetbury: 13/06/19

Twenty of us met for a very pleasing lunch at Chavanage House before a most interesting guided tour of the house, which is full of a varied collection of artefacts. The house has been used in a lot of historical films and TV dramas including Larkrise to Candleford and features a great deal in the Poldark series as 'Trenwith' – sadly Aidan Turner was not available!

Sheila Heath

Leeds

We have had one lunch since the last report at the Milford Hotel which is our usual venue and favoured by the members who attend regularly. This was on 7 April and was attended by 18. We had our usual raffle to raise money for charity. Our next lunch is to be held on 15 September and our Christmas lunch will be on 9 December 2019.

Our membership stays fairly stable as we have lost a few members but also gained a few.

Kath Leadley

Liverpool

Forty members attended the luncheon at Houghwood Golf Club on 15 June 2019 with several new faces present. After a week of virtually continuous rain and overcast skies, the sun shone and continued to do so for the duration of our visit. A three-course meal, with a glass or two of wine, was enjoyed together. A raffle, organised by Pat Rostron, was held with a large number of prizes. These were equally spread out between both large tables which satisfied all attendees and helped minimise the normal good-natured barracking regarding distribution of prizes – especially the writer who won the bottle of red wine!



Thanks were given to Sharon for the organisation of the event and we look forward to meeting again later in the year.

Exchanges were made regarding holidays already taken this year and those yet to be taken. After three to four hours farewells were said and the sky began to darken and the British summer resumed its course.

Lunches have been arranged for Friday 27 September at Houghwood Golf Club and Christmas on Friday 9 December.

Barry Hodgkinson

Loughton and Witham

Lunch with Speaker, Mulberry House: 06/02/19

On 6 February we returned to Mulberry House for our second annual lunch with a speaker. Sixty-one members, partners and guests enjoyed their choice of a two-course lunch followed by tea or coffee.



Our guest speaker, Gary Powell

Afterwards we enjoyed a fascinating talk by our guest speaker Gary Powell. Gary is a published author who joined the British Transport Police in London at the age of 18 and served for 33 years until he retired.



During his career he developed a keen interest in the architecture of London's Squares and combined this with his career experience when writing his first book 'Square London.'

His talk was based upon this book and entitled 'A Coppers Guide to the Dark Secrets of London's Squares.'

Gary told us about unsavoury residents and shocking incidents adding a colourful tone to the history of some of London's iconic squares. We learned a little of the origins of the London Square but a lot about those 'good and evil' who left their mark on them i.e. the demise of Peter Pan, the last person to be hanged for the murder of a police officer in Britain, a peer of the realm with a very dark secret and many more stories, including anecdotes from his life as a detective.



John Abbott

Mountbatten Festival of Music Review: 16/03/19

Forty members attended The Festival of Music at The Royal Albert Hall. Having negotiated heavy traffic during our journey from Chigwell, we arrived to be entertained by the Massed Bands of Her Majesty's Royal Marines performing to a full house of enthusiastic audience.

The concert displayed the outstanding versatility of some of the world's finest military musicians and they were given the 'West End treatment' with spectacular lighting effects.

The festival sees the Royal Marines showcase their incredible musicianship and pageantry and featured a wide range of musical styles, including music from the big screen, superb solo items, as well as marches and overtures that proved a big hit with the audience.



Towards the end of the concert we all joined in singing well known songs, which from a full house reverberated throughout the auditorium of the Royal Albert Hall. It made you feel very proud to be British!

We were very fortunate at having exceptionally good seats with uninterrupted views of the performance in the Rausing Circle.

All the members commented that they had thoroughly enjoyed the festival and thought it was an excellent event to attend.

The Mountbatten Festival of Music was originally conceived to honour the connection between the Royal Marines Band Service and Sir Malcolm Sargent who was the Honorary Music Advisor to the Royal Marines for over 20 years. In 1980 the festival was renamed in honour of Earl Mountbatten of Burma, who was Life Colonel Commandant of the Royal Marines until his untimely death in 1979.

The proceeds from the festival will go to The Royal Marines Charity and to CLIC Sargent, directly supporting our serving personnel, veterans and their families.

Chris Oats

Spring Buffet, Mulberry House: 04/04/19



Our annual spring buffet was held on Thursday 4 April for the first time at a new venue – Mulberry House Hotel, Ongar.

Numbers were slightly down from last year with 91 members and guests attending. All agreed that it was a resounding success. The venue and the buffet were very good, and everyone appeared to enjoy themselves with lots of conversation around the tables and the usual teasing and banter.

John Abbott gave a small speech outlining our proposed events for 2019 and this was followed by the drawing of the raffle.

We intend to go back to Mulberry House for the spring buffet next year.

Geoff Brown

Area Golf Day: 14/05/19



On 14 May we had our yearly half day at Abridge Golf Club, attended by 15 golfers of mixed ability. Set in 240 acres of beautiful parklands with excellent views of the countryside it is home to major amateur golf tournaments including the South East Regional Open Qualifier.

If I recall correctly there had been much rain beforehand, but we had a glorious day. Buggies were allowed which is great for us oldies with worn out knees etc!

We enjoyed our bacon roll and coffee as usual on arrival and then ventured out onto the course. Later there followed a very pleasant dinner.

The overall winner was Derek Adams. Roy Ellis won the Front 9 and Paul Goddard the Back 9 as well as Nearest the Pin. Malcolm Burton had the longest drive.

The course was very challenging and many golfers present would say: "I could have been better," however, we all enjoyed the day and the camaraderie.

John Spray

Summer Lunch, Mulberry House: 07/08/19



The 'brains' of the outfit with quiz-master John Abbott

On Wednesday 7 August, 49 of our members and their guests assembled at Mulberry House for a Summer Lunch. This event was scheduled to replace the Windsor Boat Trip and Horse racing events that had to be cancelled. We will, incidentally, try to re-arrange both of those next year as we know that a number of you were looking forward to them.

There was a lot of catching up and conversation before we settled down to enjoy a delicious two-course lunch with wine. The food is always an excellent standard at Mulberry House.



After tea and coffee had been served our quiz master started the specially designed, summer themed, quiz. We had three rounds, TV and film, summer miscellany and summer music. A lot of fun was had by all of the participants and the worthy winners are shown alongside and each received their individual prizes: 'do it yourself gin' and 'tonic hampers.' A good afternoon!

John Abbott

Maidstone

We had a group of 40 guests attending the BBQ at the Hadlow Manor Hotel on the 11 July. The weather looked a little overcast when we first arrived but after about half an hour the sun shone through and a thoroughly enjoyable event was had by all.

Our next trip is to Thursford and we have planned our Christmas lunch for Friday 20 December.

Anne Ransley



Maple Cross

Valentine's day meal: 14/02/19

For once the Valentines meal was on February 14. It is usually difficult to get a good deal on the day itself, but Biggles at Denham came up trumps. I didn't get lost this year (I set SatNav this time) so arrived in good time to have a chat and take some pictures. I didn't hear any tales of woe so assume everybody else made it as well.



Members anticipating lunch!

Whilst taking some early pictures of the tables a couple who were not part of the Fellowship asked what it was all about. They were interested and amazed that a company would help former employees to continue to meet up and enjoy subsidised events. I think it's great as well and haven't heard of anything like it except for the Rolling Stones Club run by William Moss which became part of Kier.

We had 37 members attend the lunch and once again had a lovely meal. Norman didn't give a speech partly because of the layout of the room and also because as mentioned previously there were also tables with non-Fellowship members on. Still I don't think anyone minded.

Just before we left, I had a chat with Warwick who told me it was their 38th wedding anniversary on that day. What a great day to choose to get married! Congratulations to them both.



Congratulations Warwick & Dorothy Stevens

St George's day meal: 25/04/19

We returned to the Belvedere Ristorante Italiano in St Albans for our St Georges day meal on Thursday 25 April. We had 31 people attending including Kevin Byrne and his wife Pauline, whose visit was the first to the Fellowship since his retirement. It was a lovely sunny day, so we sat in the conservatory chatting over drinks before the meal.

Arthur Bishop surprised many by announcing that at 90 years old he'd decided to take part in a skydive in June! It goes to show that you are never too old to try something new.



Hyacinth and Noel enjoying a drink

After a nice meal the members made their way home in the evening sunshine.

Windsor horse racing

The rain had stopped but the cloud remained as we made our way to the racecourse at Windsor. We were waiting outside the enclosure before the allotted meeting time of 4.30pm. Norman arrived bang on time with the tickets, and we made our way into the Heidsieck enclosure to secure tables for everyone.

Along with the entry ticket we also got a free programme with all the runners and riders, drinks and fish & chips vouchers, plus a little something to make a bet or two.

From the Heidsieck enclosure you can also go and see the horses in the parade ring before they race and the winner's enclosure. You can get quite close and it's nice to see these thoroughbred animals.

There were seven races starting at 5.40pm and ending with the 8.45pm. The first races went without a hitch with some horses being withdrawn due to conditions. In the 6th race one of the horses decided to say: "Neigh," throwing his jockey on the way to the starting gate! It took about 15 minutes to recapture the horse who seemed to quite enjoy running up and down the course on his own.



Winner's enclosure

In the 7th and last race, first one horse didn't like the starting gate and in the process of trying to push the horse in, the other horses became spooked and had to be let out again. After a number of attempts to get all the horses in the gates the stewards decided to retire four of the runners as it was obvious they'd

never get all the horses in at once. Eventually they started 15 minutes late and the favourite won, so obviously wasn't affected at all.

In the end some people had winners and most had losers, but everyone enjoyed the evening out which is the point. Some people stayed on afterwards for a Massaoke sing along to a live band.

Fiddler on the Roof: 07/19

We met outside the Playhouse Theatre on a cloudy but warm Thursday in July. People were chatting, waiting to receive their tickets from Norman who arrived precisely on time as usual.

The theatre had changed its seating layout so that the actors could use paths through the auditorium. As an added touch trees were used as you entered the seating area giving the idea that you were actually within the set. There was also birdsong being played which added to the effect.

The story, based on the Jewish pogroms in Russia, is actually about the generational changes in society which are common in the world. In fact when it first opened in Japan in 1967 they thought the story was so Japanese that it might not be understood in America!

It centres around the main character Tevye, who wants to follow tradition

and decides to marry his daughter to the local elderly butcher so she would be looked after. However she wanted to marry a young tailor. When the tailor asks for her hand, Tevye is at first incensed then decides, on the other hand, he wants her to be happy. His second daughter wants to marry a young student and they tell her father rather than wait for the matchmaker. He mulls this over and again, on the other hand, agrees although doesn't like it. His third daughter wants to marry outside the faith and they tell him they're going to marry. This time he decides there is no 'other hand' – it is a step too far and he disowns them.

At the end they get evicted from their homes and the whole town goes in different directions, some to America, some to Warsaw and the matchmaker, played by Anita Dobson, goes to the 'promised land' to escape persecution.

It was a good story, well-acted, and the intimate staging made the story come alive. It contains the well-known songs 'Matchmaker, Matchmaker', 'Sunrise, Sunset' and 'If I Were a Rich Man'.

After the show, which lasted about three hours with the interval, 21 of us headed up Northumberland Avenue to Prezzo to have a meal and a chat which was enjoyed by all. A great way to spend an afternoon. See photos here: <https://fiddlerwestend.com/media/>

Brooklands Museum: 25/07/19

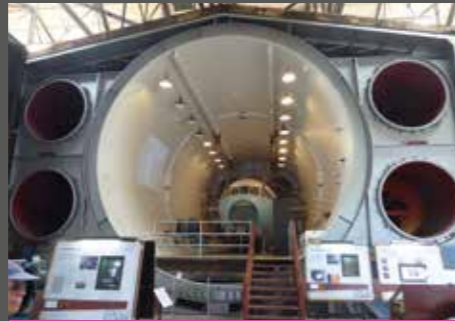
On the second hottest day of the year in July we arranged a visit to Brooklands Museum which is located near Weybridge, Surrey. Last year we visited Mercedes World which is adjacent to the museum and also enjoys some aspects of the old Brooklands track. The visit to the museum was in conjunction with our nearby region Maple Cross which provided us with the advantage of a group discount.



Concorde Cabin

There was a total of 24 members – 13 from Maple Cross and 11 from the Solent region – and we all met at the entrance to the exhibition. The visit included a ‘flight on Concorde’ being split into two groups. It was agreed, due to the nature of the museum, for everyone to visit at leisure the different areas of interest.

The museum included an aircraft park with a number of older planes that were part of our lives many years ago. Concorde was also located on the park and that is where we were taken on an imaginary flight which included



Stratosphere Chamber

very realistic aircraft sounds and even vibrations – all very real except for the first-class wines and food that unfortunately were not included! Also, there is a very detailed aircraft factory adjacent with many parts of the planes that were made and areas showing the skills that were employed. Nearby was a Stratosphere chamber where tests were carried out to simulate atmospheric conditions at 70,000ft which was initiated by the well-known Barnes Wallis (famous for his bouncing bombs) for research and development.



Nearly complete Wellington

There is an area dedicated to the motoring side and the notorious Brooklands race-track which is still there

to view in part. There were a number of race cars going from the Jackie Stewart days up to modern F1 racing cars. Various sheds are also in the grounds where exhibitions of the manufacture and construction of engines were shown together with the clubhouse. For the younger ones, a very realistic racing car simulator... much better than the X box! To complement the cars are also old motorbikes with some names that now have long disappeared.



1923 Halford Special

Finally, a very comprehensive museum of London buses going through the many areas of evolution till today's latest vehicles.

So, there was much to see and many a number of visits were made to the Sunbeam Cafe during the visit to purchase ice creams for cooling on this exceptionally hot day together with liquid refreshments. Lunch was available to provide rest to those tired feet on a very busy day.

Jeff Taylor

Rushden

Since our last report we have had several trips, not always with full support, but we have tried to keep the ship afloat.

Early February 2019 a small number were invited to Potters Leisure Resort at short notice for a Sinatra and Friends Tribute evening with a five-course dinner with selected wines – Frank and Sammy Davis were quite lifelike – enjoyable evening for all.



Members enjoying table-tennis at Potters Leisure Resort

On Saturday 16 March 2019 a small number of members travelled to The Royal Albert Hall for our annual visit to The Mountbatten Festival of Music – it was a sell out and we were unable to obtain our usual allocation of tickets – but those that travelled were regally entertained.

Our 2019 season officially started with a mystery coach trip to Trentham Gardens at Stoke and the City of Chester – 40 members and guests attended – thoroughly enjoyed and quite memorable for various historic reasons.

On Sunday 5 May 2019 35 members took a short coach journey to Ware in Hertfordshire where we boarded a boat for a river cruise with fish and chips on board plus a generous bar facility – enjoyed by all present.

On Friday 31 May 2019 43 members left Rushden for a four-day trip to the D-Day Landings in Normandy – many memories – see separate report.

Our next trip was on Sunday 9 June 2019 to the RHS Chatsworth Flower Show – wonderful setting enjoyed by 36 members – good weather until late afternoon when the proceedings were curtailed by heavy rain.

Mid-June 2019 another visit to Potters Leisure Resort on the East Coast – a midweek break for 11 members celebrated in style with good food and plenty of liquid refreshment.

On Saturday 10 August 2019 a coach load of 30 members attended the Shrewsbury Flower Show where the weather was not predicted to be very good. However, fortune smiled on us and the weather improved to provide a dry and sunny day enabling the group to make the most – enjoyed by all. To complete the year we have arranged a further visit to Potters for Christmas.

In October we have a party of 36 members in place for a visit to Winchester, Portsmouth and The New Forest – four days and three nights including a visit to the Bombay Sapphire Distillery.

Our annual visit to the Guards Chapel for The Carol Service is well subscribed, and our Christmas lunch will take place as usual.

We shall be celebrating New Year this year in England, Southport, with a party of 40 booked.

Looking into 2020 we have arranged a party of 42 to visit The Isle of Man in May 2020.

Even with Kier's economic cuts we are continuing to support 'the old folks' who enjoy our ventures into the unknown. Our total number of members at present is 157. Please give us some support and join our trips.

Forthcoming events

- Sunday 8 September 2019: House and gardens in Kent
- Friday 4 October to Monday 7 October 2019: Four days and three nights to Winchester and Hampshire
- Friday 22 November to Sunday 24 November 2019: Three days and two nights at Potters Leisure Resort
- Thursday 28 November 2019: Christmas lunch at John Whites Golf Club
- Sunday 8 December 2019: Carol service at The Guards Chapel in London
- Monday 30 December 2019 to Thursday 2 January 2020: New Year break to Southport

Possible trips

- Cotswold Whiskey and Gin Distillery
- Natural Arboretum Litchfield

Brian Hill

VISIT TO NORMANDY

After 11 hours travelling in brilliant sunshine, we arrived at the Mercure Hotel, Lisieux, eagerly looking forward to a weekend of friendship and fellowship together.

On Saturday morning we left the hotel bright and early to collect our French guide Jacques who spent the day with us taking in the American cemetery overlooking Omaha beach, the beach itself, Le Pointe du Hoc and St Marie Eglise. Jacques could vividly remember the desecration of Caen as he was a child living there on D-Day.

At the cemetery he told us that in 1947 relatives of the military personnel who died were given the choice of leaving the bodies of their loved ones in France or having them repatriated to the USA. Sixty percent of the identifiable bodies were taken back to their own country. This served to remind us that although D-Day was a success it was a huge tragedy.

As we travelled around the area, we were amazed to see photographs on the streetlights of WWII heroes together with their names. This gave a very personal feel to everywhere. We then moved on to Omaha beach itself. We saw examples of the 'floating roads' which were used

to bring equipment ashore. We passed an area known as 'Dog Bank' where only 50% of the troops survived and this was the area on which the film 'Saving Private Ryan' was based.

From here we travelled to Le Pointe du Hoc which are 100ft high cliffs. These cliffs were scaled by US rangers to capture a gun emplacement only to discover that intelligence was wrong, and the guns had been moved.

Although this tour was heavily biased towards the American military it impressed upon us what a massive operation D-Day was and how grateful we should be to the people who took part in it.

Sunday was a much more light-hearted day with a visit to Honfleur – a beautiful fishing harbour. We were told that it is one of the oldest towns in Normandy with history dating back to the 12th century. It is also the second most visited town in the Calvados region. The weather was idyllic and the atmosphere fantastic.

Some of the party chose to have a boat trip on the Seine where they sailed under the Pont de Normandie and marvelled at a true feat of engineering. The landlubbers amongst us had a tour of the town and its outskirts on a 'road train.' The choice of restaurants was amazing, and it was a thoroughly enjoyable visit.

On our return to Lisieux there was sufficient time for a quick visit to the extremely impressive Basilica which is dedicated to St Therese who entered the monastery at Carmel in 1888. Her remains were eventually removed from the cemetery there and placed in the Basilica where they are now lying under the dome. The remains of her parents are in the crypt there. The interior of the Basilica is fairly modern with beautifully tiled murals and stained-glass windows depicting stages of the life of Therese.

Monday was our day of departure and we had a lunch break at Le Touquet. This is a very attractive coastal resort which in days past was frequented by 'high society.' Just the place for a Kier Fellowship group to end a very happy weekend!

The trip was made more enjoyable because of our very pleasant and helpful driver Jason. Nothing was too much trouble for him, and he was an extremely careful and safe driver.

Our sincere thanks to Brian Hill for his efficient organisation.

Ann Whittington and Barbara Fell

Solent

Hayling Island Lifeboat Station

A visit was arranged to Hayling Island Lifeboat Station by Terry Munro, one of Southampton's office retired managers. Both Terry and his wife Linda have been actively involved with the station for most of their lives. They still help out with Terry making inspections of sailing safety equipment and giving talks to local sailing clubs, and Linda helps present lifesaving skills to school children and shows them around the lifeboat station.



The group were welcomed on a glorious sunny day with a cup of coffee in the training room, which is on the top floor of the building with stunning views over Chichester Harbour to the Witterings.

The lifeboat station was set up in 1865 following a brave rescue by three local fishermen who launched their 13ft rowing boat into rough seas to rescue the crew of a sloop (Cygnet).

The crew of the station is still made up of 30 locals working one week on call and two weeks off. They volunteer their services and must be able to respond quickly to the emergency signal, which is now a text message with sound.



The crew have just 10 minutes to get from their home or place of work to the station, put on the extensive safety equipment and launch the lifeboat following notification of an emergency. This is some feat when you see the amount of safety equipment laid out in the changing room.

The current lifeboat station was opened in 1975 and rebuilt in 1995. It remains very busy going to the aid of vessels, pleasure boats from Chichester Harbour and beyond, visitors to nearby beaches using rubber dinghies and swimmers who get into difficulties due to the strong tides.

We're lucky to have the services of Nigel Roper who is currently lifeboat management chairman. He has served as head of this station for many years and he gave a very informative talk about the station, training of personnel and his life on board rescue craft.

This station was fortunate in 1995 to get a large donation from a lady, Betty Battle, which enabled them to purchase new craft, both of which were named after this generous benefactor and whose name is used up to now on their craft and launching equipment.

Fortunately, large donations continue to allow this thriving station to continue.

Following the visit lunch was taken at the nearby Hayling Island Sailing Club where a perfect end to the visit was had with good food & drink and a delightful view over the harbour. Everyone left happy and thanked Terry, Nigel and Linda for the enjoyable visit.

Winchester College and King Arthur's Round Table



Members at the entrance of Winchester College

A visit was organised to Winchester College. This is an independent boarding school founded in 1382 by the Bishop of Winchester, William of Wykeham, who was also Chancellor to two kings.

The school remains on the original site – it was initially set up for 70 scholars from poor backgrounds. To this day the college provides bursaries to 70 boys (and only recently girls) with exceptional academic, musical or sporting talent from poorer families. The total attending the college is now 614.

A lot of the buildings from the original school remain including the gatehouse, porters lodge and dining room, all built around a quadrangle. While we were there, we were shown into the dining room just before lunch was served for the boys. It could easily have been a scene from Harry Potter with long solid oak benches and bench seats with a raised dais for the masters.

Unfortunately, as this is a school, we were not allowed to take photographs inside or anywhere near pupils.

The chapel is a lovely original building and has interesting stained- glass windows and plaques on the walls commemorating previous pupils.

The chorister courtyard is a covered area which has been used in many films with the central monument to the dead Wykehamists of the two World Wars.

During our visit we learned that the Solent office had been selected to tender for the new sports hall and at the time of writing they were negotiating a final deal.

After visiting the college, the group took a short stroll through Winchester to view King Arthur's Round Table displayed in The Great Hall near the Law Courts. The Great Hall is a medieval aisled hall of the 13th century which was part of Winchester Castle. Winchester has been identified as the site of Camelot. Dominating the Great Hall is the iconic Round Table linked to the ancient legend of King Arthur and his Knights.

Following the visits lunch was taken at a local hostelry where the visits were discussed and the cost of sending your son or daughter to Winchester College talked about, which is currently £40,000 per annum!



King Arthur's Round Table

Summer BBQ



Netley Chapel

June saw the Solent region annual BBQ rained off for the first time in many years, however two weeks later the event was rearranged and successfully held at Royal Victoria Country Park on the shore of the Solent and well attended by members.

The park was originally the site of Royal Victoria Hospital, which was a very large military hospital. At the time the main building was the world's longest building reputed to be a quarter of a mile long with 1,000 beds.

Unfortunately, all that remains is the recently refurbished chapel set in extensive grounds of nearly 200 acres.

The hospital was built in 1863 at cost of £350,000. How does this compare with the multi million new hospitals being built today?

Ian Burrell

Kings Theatre: 02/03/19

On the 2 March, eight members visited the Kings Theatre, Southsea, for a behind the scenes tour. Our very informative guide, a member of the theatre Trust, informed us of the history of the theatre and pointed out many interesting features on the way around.

Since its opening in 1907, the Kings Theatre has been an integral part of Portsmouth and Southsea's cultural landscape, providing over 100 years of entertainment. The Grade II listed theatre is an important and complete example of an Edwardian playhouse from one of the world's most renowned architects Frank Matcham. He designed and refurbished 164 buildings throughout the UK, mostly theatres – those in London included the Palladium. Many were demolished in the 1960s with the advent of alternative entertainment, mainly television, however 52 still survive.

After years of decline in private ownership Hampshire County Council purchased the building in 1990 then passed it onto Portsmouth City Council in 2001 who leased it to a newly created organisation, the Kings Theatre Trust. They have carried out a wide-ranging number of sympathetic refurbishment projects, mainly in the auditorium which has seating for 1,600 people. There are some seats in the 'Gods' which are still the original bench type and are very cramped. This area gets very hot even when the air conditioning is activated by means of opening the roof vent to create air flow.



In 1974 the theatre appeared in Ken Russell's rock opera film 'Tommy' featuring the Pinball Wizard sequence which included Elton John and the Who on stage. The South Parade pier was also the location for the film but unfortunately was burnt down whilst filming was taking place so the Kings Theatre, having survived heavy bombing of the nearby dockyard in WWII, had a lucky escape.

Like most theatres of its time there is little space in the dressing rooms and the wings are very cramped for storing scenery etc. While we were there we were allowed to 'tread the boards' on the sloping stage and experience the logistics of the newly arrived scenery and props which were being erected for a new show that evening. There is also a basement area which is used for storage. As this can sometimes flood, due to tidal movement in the nearby Solent, there is a rowing boat just in case!

The tour ended in one of the bars where we partook in tea/coffee and biscuits.

After the tour we moved onto the seafront 10th Hole, which is a very popular cafe attached to the nine-hole pitch and putt course, for lunch. So popular in fact that we had to queue outside for a while before we could be seated. We needed warming up having been stood in the chill March winds blowing straight off the Solent.

Overall a very pleasant and interesting event.

Peter Wallbank

Butlins Bognor Regis visit: 08/03/19

Despite being only three weeks from handover the site team at Butlins, Bognor, welcomed 12 members for their second visit following their first during the early groundworks and steel frame last year. This negotiated £35m project is the third completed within the existing Butlin's Holiday Centre with Kier Southern having previously successfully worked with their client, Bourne Leisure, constructing the £8m Shoreline Hotel and £18m Ocean Hotel.

The pressure was on to achieve handover to Butlins on the 1 April with paying public using the pool from the 3 April.



Pool area under construction

The project was still in full flow with 100+ operatives on site from tilers to cleaners. Jonathan James led us through the basement plant area pointing out the various pumps, controls and filters for the many features in the pools above. Then into the main pool hall to see the thousands of tiles being laid by a truly United Nations of tilers, some from as far away as Moldova. The water features were nearing completion with the pools divided into a beach with beach huts and other pools of varying depths. Fun is introduced with a wave pool, two flumes, slides and an outside lazy river ride. A large fountain is the centre piece discharging water over the central pool.



Completed pool area

Having dealt with delays earlier in the project the team were working long shifts over seven days to make the completion date. The project is a testimony to their morale and total commitment that it was achieved.



The team

Once again, we would like to thank the Kier management for their interesting tour & hospitality and congratulate the site team on completing this fantastic project.

Derek Ward

Annual lunch: 04/19

Our most popular event of our year is the annual lunch which was held in April. Maybe it is something to do with it involving food and drink and being significantly subsidised! The Lysses Hotel in Fareham continues to be our venue of choice as it provides good value and excellent service.

This year 51 people attended which included a few 'first timers' to whom we offered a free lunch. Like the wine, the conversation flowed with people catching up with colleagues and exchanging retirement experiences as well as work time reminiscences. Trevor White, our local regional director, brought us up to speed with things locally and centrally. Much more on this the next time we meet no doubt. The success of these lunches can be measured by the time people spend relaxing and chatting well after the meal is finished, which doesn't help the serving staff to clear away and rearrange the tables for the evening meals. However, they are used to that now!

Peter Wallbank

Golf day: 07/19

Once again, we made our way down to Hayling Island in July for our yearly PAR3 round of golf – a nine-hole pitch and putt. The weather was exceptional and conditions excellent. Six of us split into two groups to play and there was, as usual, a mixed range of skills! The course was very dry and so the ball was running well. Many times, a ball went running at speed over the hole and into the gorse bushes beyond... never to be seen again! The winning score for this year was 33 by Dave Pritchard which was only six over the par for the course, so well done to Dave in quite challenging conditions for the course!

After the golf we all then went to the Inn on the Beach for a well-deserved drink and bite to eat where we met John Gains and his wife Anne who joined us for the social side of the occasion. The sea was lapping the walls outside the patio areas, and the beach was quite busy with kitesurfing and other water sports.

In the picture taken in the restaurant area are:



l-r: John Gains, Anne Gains, Dave Pritchard, Richard Filer, Gary Mackie and Ellie Mackie and myself Graham Baker.

Graham Baker

Tempsford

Our first lunch of the New Year was held on 7 February at The Greyhound, Haynes, attended by 10. On 12 March we met at the Wheatsheaf, Tempsford, which has been a favourite lunch venue for many years. The food was second to none and there were 14 present. However, there will be no more visits as –following a sale of the business because of the owners’ ill-health – reports since are dire!

On 27 March, our long-awaited participation in the ‘Faulty Towers dining experience’ at the Corn Exchange, Bedford, was indeed quite an experience! There was a long delay in the start – we’re still not sure whether this was intentional having regard to the comic exchanges that ensued between Manuel and Basil! Perhaps, unsurprisingly, the meal started with ‘tomato & basil soup.’

The illustrated talks we arrange at The Anchor, Great Barford, are popular – 23 attended for the David Fowler talk on the ‘Rise, Fall and Rise Again of the Cardington Airships’ on 24 April. Having previously experienced the ‘enhanced buffet’ when we had the John Bunyan cruise, Stephen arranged this again. At £15 per head it was very good value, although one must have a group of 20 in order to be able to have it.

On 14 May, 10 of us lunched at The Five Bells, Henlow.

We brought forward our June lunch, due to the cancellation of the annual garden party, to 6 June at The Wheatsheaf, Perry. Our next lunch was on 16 July at The Toby Carvery, Bedford, where we welcomed some members who had not joined us for a long time.

Our next outing is to Bressingham Steam and Gardens, Norfolk, on 14 August, with a coach booked for 24.

Lunches are planned for each month to the end of the year, with a talk on The Queen’s Official Image Library attached to the October lunch. Our venue for Christmas lunch on 10 December will again be the Pavenham Park Golf Club.

Harold Thompson

Waterbeach

As an area we continue to see a healthy rise in new member applications which should bring new ideas and energy to the Fellowship. Our current membership totals 80 and now more than ever includes colleagues from all parts of our large geographic area.



Lunch at The Banningham Crown

When planning area events, we are mindful of distances involved for some to travel. As an example, on 9 April 2019 we arranged a casual lunch at The Banningham Crown, near Aylsham, Norfolk. This was attended by 15 members. A large number of these were colleagues who had previously worked from the Norwich office.

Our next planned gathering of 14 members is to be an afternoon tea at Congham Hall, near King’s Lynn, on 29 August 2019.

We also have plans for another lunch towards the end of October and have already booked 11 December 2019 for our Christmas lunch.

Mark Jude

Tony Norman...



The last ‘MARRIOTT X1’

Pictured: Tony Norman on his 80th birthday after a celebratory lunch with Marriott directors on 30 November 2018. Back row l-r: Sean Yeo, Mike Preston, Peter Hulmes, Roy Murphy and Ian Woods; front row l-r: Geoff Clark, Maurice Croft, Jim Marriott, Tony Norman, John Marriott and Bob Marriott which includes three grandsons of Robert Marriott who founded the company in 1890.

The last ‘MARRIOTT X1’ refers to in the early days, if you could play cricket, you could get a job with the firm!

Tony (G.A.) re-joined the company in 1964. Over the next 31 years he not only survived but was promoted at each stage of change of ownership: from when JL Kier took over Marriott, followed by the merger with WC French and subsequently the Group being taken over by Beazer and then Hanson, eventually being there for the management buyout and subsequent IPO.

Tony joined Marriott as a contracts engineer, became a contracts manager, then building manager, followed by contracts director, managing director (MD) and executive chairman along with the same responsibility for French Kier Anglia.

Whilst MD and chairman, he also became executive chairman of The William Moss Division based in



Loughborough, also taking control of the Building Division of French Kier based at Tempsford Hall, which was transferred to Marriott in Rushden.

Tony retired early with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in 1995. He still rides horses regularly but has given up playing cricket!

Throughout his career Tony was totally supported by his wife Jennifer whom he met when he first joined the company in 1959, where Jennifer was a Secretary. They are looking forward to celebrating their 57th wedding anniversary this year with their two daughters and their families.



Barmy Army in Sri Lanka...

Test Match Special

I have been going on overseas cricket tours for many years and have been fortunate to visit Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, West Indies, India and Sri Lanka. When asked I say I am on the fringe of the Barmy Army, in the shade rather than in the sun! I always go with the same tour group and now have many friends across the UK as I have seen them on many tours.

My last one was a second visit to Sri Lanka to watch the three Test Matches which I prefer rather than the one-day games. Exciting I know but I call it: "Hit and run" cricket. As they say, a Test Match is to test your skills in the game.



Old fishing boat at Negombo – now used for tourist sailing trips

I arrived in Negombo and stayed in a lovely beachside Hotel overnight. We then travelled to Ealle for the first Test Match. Ealle is a historic fortified city which was the major port until the

British expanded Colombo during the 19th century. The cricket ground is not picturesque as it looks up to the ramparts. Many supporters watch from up there for free! It was the Dutch who constructed a classic-red roofed colonial city and ramparts in circa 1640-60 after evicting the Portuguese. The British arrived and evicted the Dutch in 1796.

The Test Match was a success for England and we won by 211 runs. The weather was dry and hot albeit there was horrendous rain in the evening and night before the fourth day. A late start we thought, but no, the ground staff were brilliant and the match started on time. For cricket fans it was the Final Test for Rangava Hevatch, the great Sri Lankan spinner, who is quite a hero there. Jennings scored 146 not out. On one evening we had Matt Prior for our celebrity guest.

We visited a spice garden in Mutale and were shown different spices, how they are grown and used in food and



John at the turtle sanctuary

medicine. Then followed a river trip where we saw a Monitor lizard over 3m long, blue monkeys and birds including a few Kingfishers. They are much bigger than in the UK. We also stopped on a small island where a family lived in very basic conditions and showed us how cinnamon sticks were prepared by hand.

We then drove to Nuwara Eliya, a six and a half hour journey, for a cultural visit. It is at 6,200ft and was a hill station for the British for the cool climate. It was built to recreate England with a golf club. The Hill Club still insists on jacket and tie after 7pm every day. There are many tea plantations around.

Some of us went to the remote Horton Plains National Park where there is a remarkable 'Worlds End.' This is a precipice nearly vertical which drops 4,300ft. There are no fences (health and safety non-existent) but you are advised not to go near the edge. Sadly, the day before our visit an Australian girl was killed as she toppled over the edge.

We now travel to Kandy for the 2nd Test – or so we thought. We had heard rumours that the Sri Lankan authorities

had not booked a hotel for the teams and umpires – unbelievable but true! A political storm erupted and the Minister of Sport kicked out all the tourists in the Regency Hotel – a great hotel near the ground. You will have now guessed that we were in that hotel!

Our allocated hotel was the Jelwing hotel, Dambulla, which is excellent and in beautiful surroundings. Unfortunately, this was a two-hour drive from the ground. A five-day match – four hours in a coach each day.



Our daily Police escort

The Minister of Sport arranged for a police escort which reduced the travel time to one hour 20 minutes. They parted the traffic like Moses parting the Red Sea. Our coach driver was superb. How he never hit anything was amazing! He drove fast and he got a big tip. The towns we went through were difficult but the police managed it and the people looked at us thinking we were royalty!

The Test Match commenced and England were soon 89 for four wickets. Curran made 64 with six 6's and were all out for 290. The weather was usually OK but we did have heavy rain on day four. England won by 57 runs.



John and the tour bus

Our celebrity guest was Darren Gough who told the ladies (yes they have many ladies on these tours) his mum told him to accept the invitation for Strictly Come Dancing although he could not dance at all.

We survived the daily coach trip which each day was a white-knuckle ride!



Buddhist Temple in Colombo

By the way, Kandy is in the highlands and an attractive region of Sri Lanka. Very cultural with the famous Temple of the Tooth and others which on this trip I did not do.



A scene from the Dambulla Cave Temple

We headed for the Cultural Triangle at Herbaria on the way seeing the Dambulla Rock Temple dating back to the 1st century BC. The Buddhist monks used five caves with over 2,000sq.m of painted walls and over 150 Buddha figures being 14m long.

From Habarana we visited the Sigiriya Rock Fortress built in the 5th century. The rock is 200m high with a precarious walkway which is not for the faint hearted. A fabulous view when on top.

Next we went on a jeep safari to the Minneriya National Park which covers 34 square miles of forest and shrub with hundreds of elephants and birds. If lucky you may see Sambur deer and leopards – we did not! At the hotel we had Monitor lizards and monkeys in the grounds.

The next day we toured Anurandhapura which was Sri Lanka's first capital in the 4th century BC. It is a grand ancient site with enormous Dagobas (a unique creation of ancient Sri Lanka) a vast palace and Buddha statues. The sacred Bo-Tree is the oldest in the world being over 2,300 years old.



Peraliya Buddha Statue – Tsunami Memorial



School children in very smart uniforms

The second day was once again very hot. England were all out for 336. Bairstow scored 110. Sri Lanka then had a collapse. Five wickets falling for 35 runs. All out for 240. Rashid took five wickets for 49 runs. Bad light stopped play with 30 overs to go. In the evening we had a buffet meal with our guest Jonathan Agnew. He was a good speaker and we enjoyed his cricket stories. Also, he wished me a happy birthday and signed my card!



Jonathan Agnew (Aggers) wishes John a Happy Birthday

The third and fourth day we saw England win the match and series 3-0. The weather was still hot and sunny, however, on the third day a time of very

strong winds badly damaged our stand but nobody was hurt.

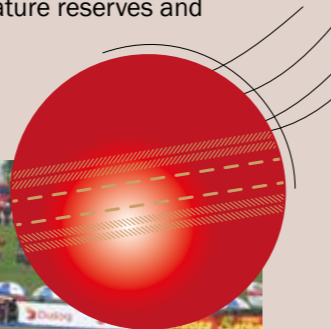
We now had a spare day and toured Colombo in the coach – Sri Lanka’s largest city and one of the biggest ports in the Indian Ocean. It is a teeming, modern business city with good hotels, restaurants, lovely beaches and fine colonial architecture.

During the trip I met Geoff Lindsey-Smith and Indy Muttucamara who were also watching the cricket.

One item I forget to mention when I arrived in Negombo at the start – we got to eat at a restaurant called ‘Lords’ which had various cricket memorabilia. The menu was cricket themed.

All in all, a very enjoyable holiday. Sri Lanka is definitely worth a visit. The people are friendly and their culture goes back to the 4th century BC. The elephant is important and apparently 2,500 roam in nature reserves and protected areas.

John Spray



Colombo Test Match



3rd Test Match, Colombo

National golf day...

West Essex GC: 23 August 2019

A glorious day welcomed the 22 players drawn from mainly Fellowship members but including a sprinkling of current Kier employees. Special thanks to Mike Palmer and Jeff Kercher who travelled up from the Southampton area.

A bacon roll with coffee or tea was enjoyed by all in anticipation of teeing off at high noon!



Pictured above: the prizes were distributed to:

- Nearest the Pin: Julian Armitage (second from the right)
- Nearest the Pin in 2: Gary Barnes (far right)
- Front 9: Mark Tomlinson – 18 points (not pictured as he had to leave early)
- Back 9: Graham Howe – 18 points (second from the left)
- Guest winner: Mike Palmer – 28 points (far left).

The winner of the Kier Group Fellowship Trust Cup was Neil Meixner (Centre) on 33 points.

Well done to all and let's hope for an even bigger turnout next year!



L-r: Ian Tidey, Julian Armitage, Colin Busby & Neil Meixner



L-r: Graham Howe, Gerry Hooper & Roy Ellis



L-r: Richard Haller, Mark Tomlinson, John Simson & Gary Barnes

All who headed out returned safely although somewhat overheated but a few beers on the terrace followed by a two-course dinner seemed to resuscitate all.

MY CAMINO FRANCÉS...

BY JEFF TAYLOR



The view on the way to Orisson Refuge

I was in St. Jean Pied de Port at the foot of the Pyrenees in France about to start my 490-mile walk across northern Spain on my own. After six months of planning, I was truly outside my comfort zone alone in a foreign country. I wanted a stamp in my Credencial – a document you need to use Albergue lodgings on the Camino – but the office was closed for lunch. I decided to forgo the first stamp and head up to Orisson Refuge where I'd booked a bed for the night. Most people walked over the Pyrenees in one go but that wasn't for me.

It was hot and steep but very peaceful with spectacular views. It took me 2.5hrs to walk the five miles with 2,000ft of climbing – not bad for a novice carrying a 9kg rucksack! Having the top bunk in a six-bed room was an interesting experience but I slept well. One chap, Evert, had walked from Belgium – so much for my five miles!

The general routine was to get up early, walk for a couple of hours, have breakfast, walk until lunch-time, then find accommodation. I only had room for three days of clothes so washing them daily was crucial. Whatever time left in the day was for exploring and buying essentials.

I had a lovely walk over the Pyrenees in bright sunshine. I heard later from other pilgrims that two days before there was sheet ice and three days later it was thick fog, so I was lucky.

The first real problem I had was in Zubiri on day three – all the accommodation was full. Using

my phone I found a room four miles away but needed to get there. I went into a bar and asked the owner: "Necesito taxi." She ordered one for me. The taxi arrived quickly, took me to the hotel and the driver agreed to pick me up the next day.

After four days and nearly 50 miles I got my first blisters – not bad considering all my training had been on the 'mountains' of the Thames Valley.

The scenery changed as we entered the Navarra wine making region. Scrub, trees and cereal crops were replaced with vines. I also walked on my first Roman road. You could sense the history of the pilgrims who'd travelled this route for the past 1,200 years, but it felt like the upkeep of the road had ceased when the Romans left. It was very rough!

There are many water fountains along the route where you can fill up your bottles. One morning we came across the Bodegas Irache which has a very ornate silver fountain. The best part is that it dispenses both water and red wine – all free! This is how at 8.00am, just after sunrise, I came to be drinking red wine.

The Logrono day is one I'll never forget for all the wrong reasons. It was 17.3 miles on a hot day, so I set out at 6.20am in the dark in order to beat the worst heat. It was a nice walk until the last three miles which was on a modern tarmac path through an industrial estate with no shade and it was really hot. I had to wait 2hrs for my



The Roman road

accommodation and my feet hurt a lot. It was here I contemplated giving up but chatting to my wife, Shirley, on the phone, she said: "Wait till morning and see how you feel."

When I woke I didn't feel too bad. It's amazing what a night's sleep can do. It was supposed to be the first of my 'rest days' with the following day being another 18 miles, but I decided to forgo the rest day and do a short walk of eight miles. Then I'd only have 10 miles the day after and I'd still be on schedule. It was the best decision I made.

Life on the trail was interesting: I came across an old couple playing 'O Sole Mio' for passing pilgrims in the middle of nowhere, and a few days later, a guy playing classical pieces on a guitar. This was all part of the joy of the Camino. I'd also meet new people and find out interesting things about them. There was a couple from Australia whose house purchase had fallen through, so they'd put all their possessions in storage and decided to see Europe and walk the Camino.

I also met a lot of people who'd left the forces. I think the routine of the Camino gave them something they'd lost. One had walked it nine years in a row. He couldn't settle into normal life and it was something to look forward to.

Eleven days into the walk, the top of my foot had started hurting so I checked with 'Dr Google' who suggested Tendonitis or a fracture recommending two weeks rest. 'Dr Volterol' had a better solution – lots of gel and strapping which



The wine fountain



A typical Meseta path

seemed to work and was how I walked the rest of the way.

At a nice looking breakfast stop in Granón, the chap in front of me presented his credit card to pay, but they didn't accept cards and he had no cash. The Camino is all about helping others, so I thought the best thing I could do was buy him breakfast – it was less than 5€. He was really grateful. That night at 'Albergue A Santiago' he was one of the four people in my room. He bought me a beer for helping him.

I'd been staying in a mixture of hotels, apartments, pensions and Albergues. Nearly two weeks in I had a night which put me off Albergues for the rest of the trip! In a really rural area I managed to secure the second to last bed in the only place to stay in the area. Unfortunately it was in a 36-bed room. The night was very disturbed, people came in late, got up in the night to go to the loo and left very early – some before 5.00am. I thought never again! The only bonus was that I'd just completed 1/3 of the route (163 miles) just 326 miles to go!

The route headed onto the high Meseta with no services, little shade and higher temperatures. There was little tarmac and the crops were again cereals, not vines. Filling up with water whenever possible was essential.

Overnight, 17 days in, there was a heavy storm. About 12mm of rain fell and the winds increased. As I left at 7.20am, the rain had stopped but the



My room in the Nunnery: sorry for the mess!

wind, at 17mph, was in my face and walking was difficult. I decided on the scenic route as I couldn't face walking into the wind along a main road. After about seven miles battling the wind I had to sit down. I was so tired I nearly fell over as I bent my knees – only my poles saved me. After a coffee stop I pushed on into Carrión de los Condes and reached my accommodation.

Unfortunately there'd been a mix-up in the booking and they didn't have a room for me after all. As it was their mistake they booked me a room at another place in the town. That's how I came to spend the night in a nunnery!

I'd been on the road now for 17 days without a rest and was beginning to feel mentally tired. At one stage I even phoned Shirley to ask her where I was – I just couldn't think. It was still five days until my rest-stop in León and I had to hang on to that thought. Luckily the next day, I passed the halfway point of my journey – a cheering thought!

The next few days were a bit of a blur. It was still windy and I reached the half way milestone. At Sahagún you could buy a halfway certificate, so I did. It was only 5€ and included a cardboard tube & entry to a museum. At least I had one certificate but I really wanted the final one. At last I felt that I might just finish.

On my next two days I used an alternative route as it followed a Roman road rather than a major highway. It was very quiet – one day I only saw



Half way

six people apart from at the hotel. The route had no houses or shops, no water and little shade, but I was walking a road used by Augustus Caesar himself.

The next day the wind dropped and I headed into León for my 'rest day' – what a relief! I was able to book the rest of my accommodation up to Sarria, where I was meeting Shirley. This took the stress out of finding accommodation each day and Shirley, back at mission control, booked the rest from Sarria onwards. I also managed to purchase new rubber pole tips as I'd lost one the day before and worn the other out. Plus, I bought a new cap as my other one had worn through. I'd stayed in León last year so didn't need to do sightseeing, but walked to my favourite Creperie and also bumped into a French crowd from Castrojeriz.

Leaving León, I again decided on the green route rather than walk along the highway. It was nice to be in the country again after staying in the city.

The next day I met a chap called Brett, and his wife Karen, who I first met after Zubiri. We talked for over an hour before pressing on. I came to Hospital de Órbigo which had a magnificent 13th century bridge – one of the longest and best preserved in Spain.

I also met a group of Irish chaps – one of whom had lived in Kilburn. I told him of the time I found a drunk Irishman in a shallow trench outside the Galtymore nightclub one morning.

MY CAMINO FRANCÉS...



Puente de Órbigo: 13th century bridge

He said: "A drunk Irishman. No way!"
We all laughed.

I reached the 2/3 point of the walk, and although it was nice to be making progress, I started to think about the finish. I was so enjoying the walk I didn't really want it to end.

The next day we reached the highest point on the Camino at La Cruz de Ferro (Iron Cross) – a symbolic rather than amazing place. The climb to nearly 5,000ft wasn't too bad as I started only 1,300ft lower. I placed a stone from home at the foot of the cross, as is customary, and remembered my journey so far. Walking down was terrible – really rocky and at a 1:8 grade for four miles. It took me over 8hrs to do the 16 miles, and my calf muscles were shot. I saw Brett & Karen here for the last time on the walk.

I now reached the 3/4 mark of the walk – the end seemed to be accelerating towards me. We were back in vine country and I noticed roses planted at the end of every row of vines. I presume this is to help with pollination. Whatever it was for it was pretty. Again, I took the Green route to keep off the roads and had a lovely walk up in the hills only seeing four people the whole day.

The next day included, what was said by my guidebook, the longest and steepest climb on the Camino – five miles with a climb of 2,300ft and it was due to be 33°C by lunchtime. I set off early and after 2hrs of walking reached the bottom of the climb. You could hire horses to get you to the



Roses at the end of vines

top if you wanted, but I didn't think that was right – and hate riding – so off I went.

I found the climb remarkably easy as I was now a lot fitter than when I'd started. Near the top I passed a sign showing 160km (100 miles) to go to the end of the Camino. We moved from Castilla y León into the Galicia region and the path immediately improved with much finer gravel and very flat surfaces. At the top of the climb in O'Cebreiro, there is the burial place of Don Elias Sampedro – the priest who started marking the Camino Frances with yellow arrows in the 1970s. This led to its revival as the major pilgrim route we see today.

Two days later I entered Sarria – my second rest day, but more importantly, it was where I was meeting Shirley who was doing the last section of the walk with me. I hadn't seen her for the whole of May – the longest we'd ever been apart since marrying 40+ years ago!

On the 'rest day', we headed to the launderette to wash all our clothes. The machine said it'd take 1/2hr, so we went exploring. We spotted a classic car show, so went to look. Shirley's eye was caught by a light blue Porsche which she said she'd like for her birthday.

"It didn't happen" (says Shirley)

The rest of the day was spent exploring the town, visiting churches, eating, chilling out and catching up.



Jeff & Shirley in Santiago

We set out early the next day walking before breakfast. Shirley loved the quiet and birdsong so early in the morning as I did. We came to the 100km marker and I took Shirley's photo. This was the minimum distance required to gain a certificate of completion. It was lovely to walk with Shirley and have somebody to talk to – it helped pass the time. It was quite a tough day with a climb out of Sarria and another climb into Portomarin where we stopped for the night. Shirley managed well but I had to remember I was fitter now so not to go too fast.

Shirley was a bit unwell the last three days of her walk, probably through dehydration. With the cooler wet weather we didn't really drink enough. Still, she pressed on, walking up some steep hills and resting as needed. I'm proud of her!

The last two days had better weather. At one stop, a wooden sculpture caught our eye which looked like an otter on top of Camino marker. It was near the entry to a bar which attracted people in for a drink.

The last day came and we climbed up past the airport and onto Monte Gozo which overlooks Santiago de Compostela. It was with mixed emotions that I entered Santiago. The busy traffic and people were annoying – I'd hardly seen any in the last 40 days – but I'd finished my pilgrimage which was great.

HOWEVER MY JOURNEY WAS FINISHED AND I'D MISS IT!

I can be a lone stranger in a foreign land and thrive.

Company is good but so is solitude, and helping strangers in need makes you feel good.

Would I do it again? Yes, it was great fun!