

The day we went to hospital

The weather did not look promising, indeed on my way to the pre visit lunch it was bucketing down, but fortunately the walk from Sloane Square to the Saatchi Gallery is not far. Arriving at the Gallery Mess I joined the other 23 in our party for lunch. At first it was a bit of a squeeze with all of us trying to sit at place settings perhaps better arranged for a lesser number; and it was hot despite the inclement weather. The Clerk to the rescue, a quick breakaway group formed, pressure on the tables relieved and service began. Although somewhat cramped the meal was of a good standard, the cod and accompaniments cooked well. The dessert, rhubarb crumble and custard, was however a bit of a mystery – the crumble being served in a dish allowing no room for the custard, it was interesting to see the various strategies adopted by the diners to get the custard and crumble to mix. There were the “hole makers”, the “eat a bit and a pour a little” triers, the “risk it and see what happens” hopefuls and variations on these themes. It was interesting to see Fletcher’s at work. I of course opted for ice cream. Lunch over it was time to go to hospital. The weather had turned kinder and we streamed down to Chelsea Hospital Road; the Master in the lead and the Clerk shepherding the stragglers.

At the gate we were met by Sergeant Michael Allen resplendent in that Chelsea Pensioner’s uniform we all know so well. The rain held off and we were treated to an external tour of the buildings before venturing inside. Historically the “hospital” is of course not a hospital at all in the sense we now use the word. It was founded by Charles II to provide a home for *les invalides*, soldiers who had fought for King and country and needed a home in their retirement, hospital in the sense of hospitality rather than a place to treat the sick; yet another classic reuse of the original French by the English – mind you we did give them “le weekend” in return.

Outside, the main part of the building is the magnificent Wren façade that provides the backdrop to the lawn parade ground and gives provenance to the hospitals extant royal connections.



We learned much from our guide about the development, past and on-going, that the Hospital has experienced. The old style accommodation, now on show in the museum, is being replaced with single room ensuite facilities for each resident. One of the wings has already been upgraded whilst the other is still a work in progress. During this refurbishment the residents are housed in modern prefab accommodation as provided to troops in Basra – the military connection continues. The money for the refurbishments has been obtained by leasing off part of the site, in this high value area, for property development. Do not worry about this loss of land, the Hospital still has some 68 acres (if memory serves me). Several of our party were intrigued, even fascinated by the large 1 metre diameter mortars that sit pointing at the river bank along with guns captured from several historical engagements in the age of empire. Having a background in public health I was intrigued by the ornate lead planters which stand along the walls of the buildings in the main piazza. These at one time served as the water tanks for the building, no surprise then to learn that lead poisoning affected the residents until the cause was discovered and the tanks replaced. The water being so unsafe it appears that the hospital had its own brewery with a mandate that the residents drank large flagons of the home brew at breakfast. The flagons are on display in the dining room, but these days the pensioners have a somewhat fresher water to drink at meal times. That is not to say that alcohol has completely left the site, for when the pensioners were asked by the management team what they would like they responded with “a bar” and a club house is now provided on site- a refurbishment of an existing building.

Inside the buildings we were introduced to yet another of those hidden wonders of London, magnificent architecture adorned with equally magnificent art. From the carvings of Grinling Gibbons, to the Reubens and other notable artists display in various rooms. The dining room (or perhaps refectory?) where the pensioners take their two daily meals is resplendent with a massive mural at one end, beautiful ceiling and a royal chair; but for me the treasure is the flags taken from the our enemies in the early 19th Century, the USA no less, an oft forgotten part of our history.

We were extremely fortunate on this visit to be accompanied by the wife of the CEO, affectionately referred to by Michael as the “Deputy Governor’s wife”, (as an aside she commented to me, “he is not he is the CEO, and I keep telling them but its not working”, perhaps an insight into the military mind - Deputy Governor being more in keeping with the hospital’s character?) this allowed us access to areas not normally included in the guided tour which included a view of one of the best paintings of Her Majesty that I have seen. There is neither space nor time to wax further on this marvellous building, so much to see, our time, though generous, hardly sufficient to take it all in. I would certainly go again and take notes. After we had said our grateful thanks to our guide, several of the party made for the tea room for a spot of tiffin under the now sunny sky. A very good day out, well organised, I am sure much enjoyed by all and a taster for a revisit?. Many thanks due to our Master and the Clerk.

John Norton-Doyle

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La Flèche

The Newsletter of the Worshipful Company of Fletchers

Our eMail Newsletter that keeps you abreast of Livery Events eVol 2014 issue 1

OUR NEW VENTURE

Now we have decided on one printed issue of La Flèche each year, we are going to supplement that with an email or web version which will be issued several times each year to keep everyone abreast of what is going on. Naturally we welcome contributions to these editions from all members of the Livery on any subject, so please send us your contributions as it is your magazine.

Articles can be on any subject that you feel might interest other members. It could be a review of a restaurant or play, it could be a description of an outing arranged by the Fletchers or an interesting visit a member has made locally.

Although we prefer the material to be sent in by email, we can accept copy and pictures sent in by post and will return any pictures after we have copied them. We can accept short reports, like the one below from our Charity Committee Chairman or longer ones like the visit to the Chelsea Pensioners and because it is purely electronic and not limited by paper or postage even longer articles and photos can be published if they are of sufficient interest. Details of how to send in material are on page 2.

JLD

CHARITY REPORT



**BRITISH WHEELCHAIR
ARCHERY ASSOCIATION**

On 19 June I attended the 10th Annual Archery Championships in Stoke Mandeville. The event, organised by British Wheelchair Archery Association is one that your trust donations support each year and has done so for the last seven years. Unlike previous years, this year was not an international event as no overseas countries were represented, partly because of the ever growing number of international tournaments. For example, a number of BWAA archers (including three Fletcher freemen and four other Fletcher grantees) were representing GB in Czech Republic from the 21 – 30 June 2014.

Fine weather ensured good shooting including the arrow tie breakers. The BWAA website is being modernised and will have further information on their activities and will have a link to our own, which we will

reciprocate and thus provide more information to both bodies.

C.J. Brown, Chairman

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Master's Scrapbook– The First Three Months

My first three months as Master started with a “be nice to the French” theme and ended with the “Grand Depart” from Harrogate of the Tour de France. It’s almost as if a small Fletcher’s initiative became a national enthusiasm!! It’s a bit daunting to see what national impact we shall have in the next 3 months!!

My scrapbook of the last three months is full jottings, clippings and photos of over 50 events that I have attended on your behalf.

The efforts of many have been focussed on the Hall development and I want to thank everyone who has put in so much effort already to this most significant of projects for this generation of Fletchers. Clearly there is still a long way to go.

Alongside the Hall project meetings there have also been regular committee meetings on Fletchers’ business and the members’ events that are reported elsewhere in this issue. These include the visit to the Royal Hospital Chelsea, courtesy of a friend, Angela Currie, wife of the RHC Lieutenant Governor; a City Walk organised by the Fund Raising Committee which raised funds for the Fletchers’ Trust and a trip to Portsmouth for a visit to the Mary Rose organised jointly with the Bowyers’ Company.

However, in addition there have been many other events – some grand, some educational, some ‘once in a lifetime’ opportunities and all great fun.

In addition to the shared visit to the RHC in May, June saw me back again for the Governor’s Parade and, most recently, for the Drumhead Service of remembrance for those who volunteered to serve in the First World War organised by the Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’ Association in the presence of HM the Queen. Unfortunately both events suffered from badly timed heavy showers but only at the former were surviving Livery Masters roundly applauded by the Chelsea Pensioners for our fortitude.

Livery Masters were also in damp and occasionally wet conditions on what is now an annual weekend in Ironbridge at the beginning of June and, even though I had made a family visit to the World Heritage Site some years ago, there were plenty of new developments in the collection of museums and there was a lot to learn. If you haven’t been I can certainly recommend that it is time well spent.

My turn to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden Party was fortunately blessed with a fine day. Less grandly I have also attended lectures, debates, Church services, flag raisings with many fanfares and other uplifting music. There were also several charity events and more than a few Livery lunches dinners plus a special mention for supporting the Clerk at the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry Employers’ evening.

Andrew McMillan

Notes for Contributors.

Articles should be between 150 and 350 words long and emailed to john@dumbrell.org.uk or sent in typewritten format. Pictures can be any size and will be returned. Letters to the Editor should be short and to the point. The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters or articles as necessary.



Our electronic edition appears at intervals throughout the year, so copy can be sent in at any time, but copy for our printed edition in **May 2015** should reach me by **1st April**.

John Dumbrell, Editor - john@dumbrell.org.uk

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Our Guided City Walk



On the evening of the 5th June Hermione Crosfield & Bob Hall organised a City Walk in aid of the Fletchers’ Trust. 24 of us, led by the Master, assembled in the Guildhall Yard at 6.15 and Murray Craig, Clerk of the Chamberlain’s Court arrived to act as our guide.

We started off in the Guildhall Yard with Murray describing the find of the Roman amphitheatre when the Picture Gallery was being rebuilt in the 1980s. The remains were incorporated into the project and can be seen under the gallery. The dark stone circle in the yard shows the layout of the arena which could seat 6000 Londoners.

Murray also pointed out the green door to a Georgian building in the SE corner which used to be the home of the Irish Society – a relic of the settlement of English and Scots colonisers in Ulster. The tour continued down Basinghall St, where the Maid’s Head was pointed out on the opposite building. This showed the building was owned by the Mercers’ Company and later in the tour we were shown the marks of the Goldsmiths and the Haberdashers Companies. A quick dive into Masons Avenue showed the original site of the Masons’ Hall destroyed in the Blitz. Passing round the back of the Guildhall with Murray pointing out all the sights on the way, we emerged on Gresham Street to see the Wax Chandlers Hall next to the Goldsmiths. At one point in the tour we could see 3 fine modern building by Foster, Rogers and Grimshaw respectively. The tour included a surprising number of green spaces and ended next to what appeared to be a memorial to William Shakespeare but in fact commemorated John Heminge and Henry Condell who had the foresight to save the folio of first editions of his plays.



Throughout the Tour, Murray provided a continual stream of information with many interesting and witty anecdotes and was thanked at the supper by the Master for his mastery of the subject.

We then moved on to the Balls Brothers wine bar in Carey Lane for an excellent meal. Adrian Scott Knight had donated two bottles of Champagne which Hermione raffled. This raffle netted a further £300 for the Trust with Elaine Galloway being the lucky winner. Our thanks go to Adrian for the gift of the raffir prize and to Hermione for organising a most pleasant evening.

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