



The official Newsletter of the
International Yachting Fellowship of Rotarians in Great Britain and Ireland

Rotafleet News



The International Fellowship of Rotarians is a group of Rotarians dedicated to the promotion of yachting and other boating activities as an opportunity for friendship and service. This fellowship operates in accordance with Rotary International Policy but is not an agency nor controlled by Rotary International.

Spring/Summer 2017

Commodore's Report

The year seems to have flashed by, but then don't they say that as you get older time seems to accelerate!

Life has certainly been moving fast for us, and Rosemary and I have been very fortunate to have been able to visit with many of you and get involved in your activities. A characteristic of all our visits is the friendly atmosphere in all the fleets, and the eagerness of the members to participate in and get involved in new ventures. Even though the number of boats in some fleets is diminishing, new alternatives are always being explored, such as canal trips and boat hire. As a result of this we are still a very active fellowship.



Membership numbers remain static and, although we have had to downgrade the Poole Fleet to a squadron, there are hopes of a new fleet being forming in the North West of England.

On a personal note we were heartened to receive an invitation from the Netherlands Fleet, from whom we had heard nothing for a couple of years. Their fleet is meeting up for the Dutch Whitsun weekend, and Rosemary and I will be joining them (although we will have to fly rather than take our boat because of time constraints).

We are looking forward to the summer season and there is a list of things that I must do on the boat. The disheartening thing is that some of them appeared on last year's list as well! One day I will

learn to enjoy slapping on antifouling paint and sanding down and applying coats of varnish. I also want to know why the seagulls seem to pick on my boat when they have the choice of more than a hundred others in the marina!?!

A number of fleets have very kindly invited us to their events during the summer and we are anticipating an enjoyable time. Rosemary and I are also travelling to part of Area 1 in conjunction with the Wheelchair Foundation to distribute wheelchairs in Zimbabwe. As part of this we will be attending the

National Conference in Victoria Falls. We will be taking copies of Rotafleet News to give them an idea of what IYFR in the UK is all about, but I am not visualising a Victoria Falls Fleet!

The Area 1 meeting in Alicante seems to be attracting a lot of interest and should prove an interesting time as we support Area Commodore Bob Burns, and I am very heartened that the Fellowship is getting involved with many charity events. Although the principle aim of our fellowship is not charity, a number of fleets are involved in sailing charities, especially offering practical hands-on help as well as financial support. This not only raises the profile of IYFR but also complements Rotary itself.

In conclusion, we are having fun and I hope that all members of IYFR are getting the same out of their involvement with an institution which has been now around for the last 70 years: from the simple act of flying a Rotary burgee to help identify yourself as a Rotarian, to a worldwide fellowship of fleets that enjoy a common interest and a love of “simply messing about in boats.” The picture is of me and Rosemary cutting the IYFR 70th Anniversary birthday cake at Leamington Spa with a cutlass.



One thing that we have been looking into is the possibility of the IYFR applying for a warrant to use a Defaced Blue Ensign. That is, the Blue Ensign with the addition of the IYFR logo. However the rules are quite strict and IYFR might not meet the criteria to be granted a warrant to fly a defaced ensign.



IYFR 70th AGM at Leamington Spa

The Woodland Grange Conference Centre was chosen for this year's AGM because of its good central location in the UK. It was also close to the impressive Hatton flight of locks, known as the "Stairway to Heaven" in their day, and many National Trust properties. There was much to see and explore in this attractive Heart of England, and the venue provided an excellent base.



Apart from the AGM, the main purpose of the weekend was to celebrate the Seventieth Anniversary of IYFR, which was actually founded in the UK. As a result the dinner on the Saturday night was formal, and complete with a



birthday cake. In a total break with water, the afternoon visit was to the British Motor Museum at Gaydon, where many members were reunited with cars from their youth. Patrick Tyrell was even reunited with his uncle's Ford-Tyrell racing car from the 1960s (remember the name?), which he used to sit in as a boy at his uncle's farm.

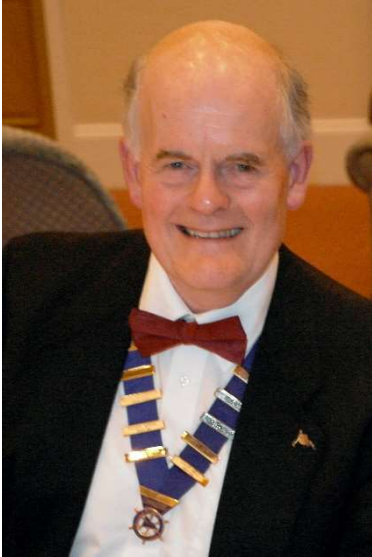


The collection was formed in the 1970s when a division of the British Leyland Motor Corporation was formed to maintain the company's collection of historic vehicles. Called BL Heritage Limited, it was based in Warwickshire and had a large display at the London Transport Museum. During the 1980s vehicles from other British motor manufacturers were added, and in 1983 the collection was granted charitable status as the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust. Opened in February 2016 under the new name of the British Motor Museum, the 65-acre Gayden site brought together all of the Trust's operations for the first time, providing exhibition and storage space for a collection of over 250 vehicles and archive of over 2 million photographs.



Members at the 70th Anniversary Dinner of the International Yachting Fellowship of Rotarians
Woodland Grange Conference Centre, Warwickshire
1st April 2017

In Memoriam – John Cranston



The AGM was saddened to hear of the passing of John Cranston on 23rd March following a short illness with cancer. Aged 73, he had been involved with IYFR for many years, latterly as the Treasurer where he kept a very tight and well-ordered ship. He had a lifelong love of sailing, and for over 40 years kept a dinghy on Grafham Water in Cambridgeshire, where he spent many hours racing and enjoying his boat. He had also been President of the Kimbolton Castle Rotary Club as recently as 2016.

John had many interests in his retirement which followed a long career as an accountant in London, latterly in the public sector. He spent time walking, cycling and collecting stamps and was involved in many organisations, principally as a school and mental health trust governor. He will be missed by all for his enthusiasm and encouragement, and for the passion he directed to all his many interests.

Boarncruiser 41

A well maintained, fully equipped 41ft. traditional Dutch steel cabin cruiser is available for offers around £99,000. It has teak decks with stainless steel fittings, outside steering, canopy and Bimini, with a Perkins Sabre 225hp diesel engine, electric bow and stern thrusters, new batteries and battery charger, inverter and Ebersbacher heater. Accommodation comprises a saloon, dinette area and galley with fridge and microwave, master bedroom with island bed and ensuite. There is a second electric toilet and washbasin forward. The Rotarian owner has travelled extensively in it on the inland waterways of France, Belgium, Germany and Holland, and all maps are included together with 2 folding bikes, inflatable and outboard on davits. Please contact David Smith, Fenland and Suffolk Fleets, on 01480-475259.

A Summer Cruise Around the D-Day Beaches of Normandy

After visiting the ports of Ramsgate, Boulogne, Dieppe, Fecamp and Le Havre, *Lollipop* reached Honfleur in just under a week, despite the headwinds and frequent rain of mid-June 2016. Following a couple of days enjoying Honfleur, it was time to move on! Rather than by-pass the small harbours along the D-Day beaches (most of which have restricted access hours around High Water), we decided to try to visit most of them en route to St Vaast and Cherbourg, from whence we would cross back to the UK. This would allow us to take in some of the museums and sites of special interest.

As I hadn't visited Deauville/Trouville before, that became our first port of call. It's only a short hop from Honfleur, and, if you leave at the start of the tidal flow, it's quite easy on the slack tide and early ebb to get down the Seine, and thus around the Ratelets and into Deauville before the tide drops too far. The harbour approach dries, but there is plenty of water for a couple of hours on each side of High Water. Once into the harbour walls the channel looks pretty straight on the Almanac Chart, but silting means that your actual course is very far from straight to avoid all the sandbanks. This photograph, taken at Low Water clearly shows the build-up of sand, shingle and mud on either side of the harbour walls.



The entrance into the gated basin on the Deauville side is really straightforward, with gate opening times relative to HW as given in the Almanac. As with all the outer harbours along this coast, it virtually dries out at LW, so double checking the tides is vital! The visitor berths are on a linear

pontoon to port in the second basin, and are well equipped with power and water. As there was no obvious port office we walked over the lift bridge where the two basins meet, and then around to the Yacht Club. There we were advised that the Bureau de Port was in the small GRP cabin by the lift bridge. “The harbour master is sure to be found around there, somewhere”. Eventually contact was made, dues paid and the all-important card giving access to the shower block supplied. Regrettably the key information that a 2 Euro coin is needed to operate the shower was omitted!

Perhaps the most interesting feature of Deauville and Trouville, apart from them being holiday spots for the rich and famous, is the ferry between the two towns. At high tide this is an ordinary ferry boat, but at low tide it takes the form of a ‘passerelle’ bridge which is lowered from the ferryboat steps (photo below) on the Trouville side to span the river. This is quite narrow but over very disconcertingly fast flowing water at low tide.



Having been into Deauville we gave Dives-sur-Mer a miss, and went straight to Ouistreham (which is the only all states of tide port between the Seine and Cherbourg). Here we locked into the Caen Canal. The Almanac is vital again because the bridge opening times along the Canal are strictly adhered to and don't correlate at all with the lock times! As a result we had a bit of a wait at the strategically vital “Pegasus Bridge”, which had been so critical to the success of D-Day invasion. The World War II Bridge is now ashore as part of an outdoor exhibition, although the replacement is actually an exact replica!

Otherwise the trip up the canal is pretty straightforward with the marina staff in Caen helpful and forthcoming. The modern City of Caen still boasts a very extensive citadel, which has been modified and improved over the centuries (including a modern art gallery), together with some excellent bars and restaurants. Well worth the trip up the Canal.

The following afternoon, to facilitate a rapid exit the next morning, we made our way back along the canal to the marina, mooring just inside the lock. This was good because the lock out of Ouistreham was fairly challenging with so many boats all leaving at the same time. This included a couple of fairly large barges and as a result we were directed to the larger of the two locks. This was not easy to use as most of the mooring wires were not fixed at the bottom or



broken, with no other obvious means of mooring. To add to the challenge, as the water approached sea level, a large baulk of timber running along the side of the lock was exposed. Presumably this helps prevent larger ships and barges from coming into contact with the side of the lock, but is not very friendly to small boats! With so many boats locking out at once, it turned into a real bun fight once the downstream lock gates opened. However only we and a few other British boats (more about them later) headed west towards Courseulles-sur-Mer. As the light wind was bang on the nose, and we didn't have much spare time, we motor sailed along the coast, then around the various

sandbanks and rock shelves for the final approach. There was the fantastic sight of a small pod of dolphins on the way in.

The main harbour has staging for fishing boats to port as you enter, and has a small river and secondary harbour (local boats only) off to starboard through a swing bridge. The main basin is straight ahead through a lock gate and lift bridge. The picture on the previous page shows the view from the bridge (the tide gate is underneath) looking down harbour with the fishing boat berths on the right. Not so sure how useful “Lifeboat” on the left is, all dried out on the sand! The harbour entrance and approach channel angles off to the left at the far end of this picture.

Once the gate is closed a digital display gives the times of the next opening. The inner basin is given over almost completely to pleasure craft. Once through the gate and bridge, we were guided to a hammerhead berth by a helpful local. We then booked in at the Bureau de Port, which was quite near to our berth (off to the right in the picture below, which is taken in the other direction from the same bridge above), before setting off to explore the town. This proved to be a very pleasant small seaside resort with several restaurants and bars, together with a Canadian D-Day Museum.



The next afternoon we moved down to Port-en-Bassin, passing close offshore to the harbour built off Arromanches (Port Winston) following the D-Day

landings. The outer wall of the harbour, made up from Mulberry harbour units, can still be made out, although many of the individual units are now breaking up. The entrance to Port-en-Bessin is about 4.5 miles beyond Port Winston and boasts a large, almost circular outer harbour. Care must be taken to avoid a sunken wall off to port just inside the entrance, but the route through to the lock is fairly obvious provided you've checked the Almanac carefully before entering. The lock channel is quite narrow and the lift bridge over one end is opened to allow approaching boats to get through. Traffic lights control the flow, which is very useful as some very large fishing boats are based here.

Visitor berths in Port-en-Bessin are very limited and on a short pontoon immediately on the starboard side once through the lock. The picture below says it all, although at a push with rafting it might manage seven or eight boats. Power and water was available, and booking in was done through the



local tourist office across the lock. This office also hosted the facilities for visiting boats and these were slightly bizarre, featuring the largest separate shower, loo and vanity areas ever seen. However this limited the facilities to just one male and one female suite.

In the picture *Lollipop* is the white boat at the back with the red jib and sprayhood. The other boats belong to a small group of Brits we had travelled with for several days. They were from Ely Sailing Club (based up the River

Itchen). Several of their crew members were former Royal Marines visiting local memorials to Marines who had lost their lives when Port-en-Bassin was stormed as part of the D-Day landings. This added a certain poignancy to our visit.

Port-en-Bassin has one of the largest fishing fleets in France with very extensive facilities to service them around the inner basin, including a huge travel hoist. The town itself is very pleasant and we were lucky that we visited on market day. This was a typical French affair with vegetables, fruit, meat, fish, cheese and clothing all on sale. That evening we ate dinner in a harbour side restaurant, literally across the road from the boat.

Our next port of call, Grandcamp, was another short hop along the coast. The harbour entrance is straightforward, but watch out for fishing boats in the narrow entrance. Visitor berths are on pontoons to starboard (the visitor berths have yellow edges and so are easy to spot). As usual, the port office was closed when we arrived in mid-afternoon. However we got lucky when a resident Englishman kindly gave us the code for the loo and shower block. The best dining (with good free WiFi) was in the pizzeria/brasserie at the top of the main ramp off from the marina. The harbour office was open in the morning so we paid our fee, and got a goody bag. Not our favourite French town, but a safe place to stop when needed.

The next day it was off to St Vaast and so back onto the more normal cruising route. However, taking in these less visited, drying harbours is well worth the effort, particularly if your cruise is outside of the main holiday period. Given time, there are many historic sites and museums to visit. Should you like your history to be linked to the Norman invasion of 1066 rather than the allied landings, Bayeaux and its famous tapestry are only a short bus ride away from the coast. In general you have about four hours to get from one harbour to the next if you leave as soon as the tide gate opens. However you do need to maintain a good speed and take care to follow the advice given in the Almanac. Connecting to power wasn't a problem at any of the harbours (although the sockets at Port-en-Bassin took some working out: insert and twist the plug to switch the power on). Water is also generally available, but we didn't see fuel for pleasure craft in any of the smaller harbours. Diesel was however available at Ouistreham, St Vaast and other larger harbours.

Chris Bridgwater (Hanse 320, Lollipop)

Solent Fleet AGM

Autumn/winter is traditionally the period for shore based activities, and November saw the AGM of the Solent Fleet, held at the Royal Southern Yacht Club on the Hamble. This was a special occasion for a number of reasons.

Firstly it was attended by GB&I Commodore Robin Sudlow, his wife Rosemary (who is also Commodore of the East Coast Fleet), and Nigel Wrigley, Commodore of the Poole Fleet, with his wife Sandy. It was also the Solent Fleet handover from Commodore John Cogley to the new Commodore, Stuart Wineberg, shown here with Robin Sudlow. Most significantly though, the AGM marked the creation of a Poole Squadron within the Solent Fleet.



During the last season the Solent Fleet ventured into the Royal Motor Yacht Club in Poole, and the members were made welcome there by both the club and by Nigel Wrigley. During the evening the conversation turned to the possibility of some sort of merger between the two

fleets as the Poole Fleet has sadly been somewhat diminished in numbers over the last few years. This could ensure the survival of IYFR in Poole and offer the Solent Fleet the opportunity for a wider range of rallies in the future.

Discussions of this idea with the GB&I Bridge suggested that rather than merge the fleets, which would have resulted in the disappearance of the Poole identity in IYFR, a Poole Squadron should be created within the Solent Fleet. This would create the possibility of it returning to Fleet status at some time in the future, should numbers permit. This proposal was put to the AGM and agreed with confirmation from Nigel that it had unanimous approval from the Poole Fleet members.

Everyone is looking forward to this season and the opportunities it creates to welcome boats from Poole into the Solent, and to provide an excellent staging post in Poole for longer rallies from the Solent.

Where it All Started: A Friendly Invasion

It is perhaps worth remembering where the idea of a Poole Flotilla started. In August 2016 the Solent fleet decided to spread its wings beyond its normal boundaries and paid a visit to Poole. The weather had been fickle but this cruise was blessed with a few really excellent days. These started with a run down to the Harold Hayles berths at the back of Yarmouth harbour. For the uninitiated these offer a very pleasant hideaway, avoiding the crowded boat juggling that is inevitable on the main harbour pontoons.

Unfortunately Solent Fleet members are all too used to playing dodgems with ferries, cruise liners, warships, jet skis and a myriad of other vessels during the summer. So leaving the Solent is always like throwing a magic switch that makes all this other traffic vanish. As soon as they entered Poole Bay the waters magically cleared and the only real risk of a collision was with the odd lobster pot. Most of the fleet chose the North Channel route, past Hurst Castle and out of the Solent. However a couple of boats read the winds better and took the more southerly Needles channel, setting themselves up for a very easy single tack all the way into Poole harbour.



We were the guests of the Royal Motor Yacht Club, a venue none of us had visited before. The club has a compact marina wonderfully sited in Sandbanks, just inside the Poole harbour entrance. Those members of our cruise who are fortunate enough to own larger yachts were exiled to swinging moorings outside the marina, although these are served with a taxi boat. The rest of us, very much on faith, followed the narrow but clearly marked channel into the marina entrance, trying to ignore the bleating shallow depth alarms on our instruments. Everyone arrived safely and we were assisted by an excellent berthing master who tucked us all in.

On a hot afternoon the true personalities of the various crews became apparent. These ranged from sedate snoring from some cockpits, through to the crew of the *Arabesque* who, always adventurous, broke out their folding bikes and disappeared into town. We took the middle ground and went to admire some of the multi-million pound houses in Sandbanks, discovering a fabulous garage selling elite vintage cars along the way.



In the evening we were delighted to be joined for dinner by the Poole Fleet Commodore Nigel Wrigley and his wife Sandy. Our Commodore John Cogley thanked them for their hospitality and extended an invitation to them and any members of the Poole Fleet who wished to join any Solent events in the future. The next day saw a parting of the ways with some boats heading for France, others for the West Country, and the rest back into the Solent.

Stuart Wineberg

Scotland (Clyde & East Coast) Fleets' Joint Fitting Out

In March 2017, the Clyde and East of Scotland Fleets held a Joint Fitting Out in Oban, Argyll & Bute. Murray Grubb, the East of Scotland Fleet Commodore, must be the world's best negotiator for putting together a hotel package deal that could not have been bettered. A Friday visit to Cruachan Hydroelectric Power station, with lunch, provided the ideal meeting point for folk travelling from both sides of Scotland. It was an interesting tour inside the "Hollow Mountain" which acts as a rapid response reservoir/battery for the

national electric grid. It was also an ideal venue out of the rain, but unfortunately no cameras or phones are allowed.

Arrival at the Oban Bay Hotel and Spa was problematic due to limited parking, but “broke the ice” as the “extra provisions” were unloaded, facilitating good fellowship prior to dinner, and nightcaps afterwards.



A better Saturday weather forecast suggested that a trip to the Seil and Easdale Islands would be the perfect way to get rid of any ‘cobwebs’. This of course entails crossing the Atlantic, by bridge at Seil! The drive down was very scenic and enjoyable in itself, whilst Eilleanabech is a very picturesque destination. Here a ferry also crosses the Atlantic to Easdale Island, so some IYFR members can now also claim to have crossed the Atlantic in an open boat as well. Interestingly, Eilleanabech is the venue for the annual World Stone Skimming Championship with many regular foreign participants.

Saturday night fellowship, dinner and nightcaps were again enjoyed by all and everyone agreed that the joint format was a good template for the future.

Ann Lockhart

Thames Fleet Summer Cruise

The problem with the River Thames is that it is long! The members of the Thames Fleet are moored in various locations along its length so the planning of an annual week's cruise is always going to be almost twice as long for some as it is for others. Getting to the start, cruising and then returning home all makes for plenty of boating in the middle of what we laughingly call an English summer.

Therefore an annual change of start is chosen by Commodore Grant Mackenzie to equalise any inconvenience so caused, Abingdon being selected in 2016. This meant that the short straw was drawn by pipe smoking single handed sailor Neil Winkless from Thames Ditton who had to traverse 84 miles and 30 locks just to get to the start! What's more he did it in 2 days and nights with not a smoke trail in sight, nor indeed an engineer's invoice to betray his progress.



Meanwhile the rest of the convoy decided to break the inevitable gallop to the start by first converging on UTMYC (Upper Thames Motor Yacht Club) and the Sonning Mill Theatre. Here a splendid evening of schoolboy food and a total farce of a play left all in stitches, an occasion entirely due to the foresight and initiative of the hard working secretary, Nigel Fentiman.

After another day and night, 13 members of the fleet and 8 boats converged on Abingdon Lock Island for the commencement of our nautical nonsense. The

flagpole (complete with yardarm!) was raised with both IYFR pennant and Red Ensign in position to salute a week of cakes, tea, tablecloths (yes,



tablecloths, the crew of *Pentonia* and *Vannessa*, wished to maintain high standards), wine and fellowship.



Having reached the upper middle levels of the Thames just to get started, we needed to turn round and go back downhill to actually start our summer cruise at a very steady pace. In simple summary of our dodging the rain, watching

the sun come out every evening and observing the navigational necessity of always going downstream each morning:

- We dined at Abingdon in the 'Marie Celeste Hotel' overlooking the river where we were the only persons present (we insist we had showered first!)
- We moored at Rodney Davis's back garden with 8 boats rafting out to create a fine sight and a target for lots of nautical advice!!



- We dined out at Benson after setting off the fire alarms in the dining room and evacuating all 60 other diners to the bank side.



- We quizzed just below Goring Lock with new tablecloths, BBQs, cakes, smoke, and watched the Vice Commodore trying to avoid falling in.
- We fish and chipped at UTMYC, with *Pentonia* behind the bar.

- We played in rubber dinghies at Harleyford and *Tarragon* gave an impromptu performance of the Mikado from the bathing platform before dining at the golf club.
- *Wild Holly's* two sea dogs cleared the Manor Island of Canadian geese, much to the acclaim of the other boats moored on the island.
- We barbecued at Bovney Lock Island and suffered the sound of bag pipes from one of our number in the twilight of the setting sun.
- "Happy Hour" actually totalled approximately 16 hours.

We travelled some 71 miles and traversed 24 locks on the cruise itself, and in the words of our Commodore, demonstrated why the fellowship in the IYFR Thames Fleet is so friendly and inclusive.

Howard Cox

A Great Handover for the Oldest Fleet

The planned raft-up of the East Coast Fleet for the Handover at Burnham on Crouch had to be changed to allow some to attend the funeral of former member, John Gibson. Instead a leisurely sail was followed by cream teas in the garden of Alan and Sue Paterson. Twenty-five members spent a very



enjoyable afternoon swapping tales and catching up. Peter Carter, son of Sylvia Carter, one of the first Commodores of IYFR, even made it back in time from a trip up to St Katherine's Dock in London.

Commodore Bob Francis handed over to Vice Commodore Rosemary Sudlow with Peter Burton becoming Vice Commodore, and Gaynor Thompson, Rear



Commodore. Eric Newton kindly agreed to stay on as Treasurer with Alan and Sue Paterson as joint Secretaries. Burgees were flown on Alan's temporarily constructed mast in the middle of the lawn: his own was damaged by a passing Gin Palace at the Clacton Air Show the week before.

It was wonderful to have so many old friends together, all of whom had shared trips over the past few years to St. Katherine's Dock, Chatham, Bradwell, Ipswich, the East Coast in general, and even to Holland.

Area 1 Potsdam Meeting

We visited Berlin a few years ago and had mastered the train and bus routes. Surely we would be able to navigate to Potsdam! After all we had a chart (map), both of us had done our Yacht Masters Navigation, and we also had a useful set of instructions to get from the airport to the hotel.

We were supposed to sit on the bus until it reached the Zoo Terminus, which Rosemary and I knew having stayed nearby previously. The bus stopped, but not at the Zoo Terminus, and then the driver shouted in German, which we interpreted as everybody off! This railway station was not the one we expected to be at, but by a brilliant feat of seamanship and navigation we located a line that would connect with the station we wanted.

We eventually got to Potsdam station and then had to fall back on the instructions. This involved several bus and tram interchanges. However, when we got off the bus, we were struck (almost literally) by a tram which appeared to be heading where we wanted to go. So throwing caution to the wind we jumped on and arrived at the designated stop for the hotel. Disconcertingly there was no sign of a hotel near the stop, but after searching we found a sign pointing down a rather muddy road and arrived at the hotel. Subsequently we found that the tram terminus was by the hotel and that we could have spared ourselves a muddy trek.

The Hotel was interesting and I suppose the name of the road on which it is situated might have given us a clue, *Zeppelinstrasse*. The hotel was built on the site of the factory which produced German airships before and after the First World War. This explained the many model airships floating around our heads in the foyer and dining room.

The zeppelins have a personal connection for me, having passed the monument to the first one that was shot down over England on my way to school every morning. The Zeppelin raids seemed to have an affinity for the East coast. They raided Southend, Gravesend, Ramsgate and Lowestoft, having been specifically forbidden to drop bombs on London by the Kaiser!

There were 120 delegates from GB& I, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Israel, Turkey, Poland, and Holland, plus the International Commodore from the Philippines. Luckily, most spoke English as just being able to order two beers doesn't give you much of a conversation. Several of us arrived early to explore Potsdam with its beautiful lakes, parks and historic buildings, including our favourite *Schloss Sanssouci*, and the *Cecilienhof* palace which was the site the Potsdam conference at the end of the Second World War.

Potsdam was the Whitehall of Germany and some of us visited the striking *Neues Palais*, the Kaiser's Berlin residence. It was here that the declaration of war which formally started the First World War was signed by Kaiser Wilhelm. It features a newly refurbished marble floored great hall modelled on Versailles, whilst an unusual indoor grotto totally decorated with shells provided a surprising find.

Our first (Friday) evening was spent in a truly IYFR fashion, sitting on a boat with glasses of wine and beer touring the lakes of Potsdam. Starting from the hotel, the timing was such that we managed to get the atmospheric effect of the lights and the isolated buildings in the forest reflecting on the water. Either the sensation of being on the water or perhaps the wine and beer encouraged the Italian contingent to burst into song. Not to be outdone, the Iberian contingent joined in with song, plus a traditional dance which looked suspiciously like the Conga. The British contingent loosened the top buttons of our shirts and started planning our response, which was that we should form a committee to plan and prepare our musical contribution for Alicante 2017! Great fun was had by all.

The AGM on Saturday was led by Bob Burns as Area 1 Commodore. There were interesting reports from various fleets highlighting different approaches because of the different climates and geography. Musters and Regattas seem very popular in the Mediterranean fleets. The message was that IYFR is alive and well and is contributing to Rotary fellowship and to community service.



The obligatory coach trip/walk covered much of Potsdam with thankfully an English-speaking coach for us and a German-speaking coach for everyone else. Forget about Brexit, the Italians all suddenly became British! A drink and snack

break at the 125 Potsdam Yacht Club gave us a chance to see the sailing activity on the lakes, whilst evening was booked as an Oktoberfest.

On Sunday we opted out of the bus tour of Berlin, which included a visit to the Reichstag and a sumptuous tea. We used the time to enjoy the *Gemäldegalerie* art gallery which we especially wanted to see. In the evening, we stayed in central Berlin for the Light Festival. Dramatic but well-known facades are lit up by light artists, including the Brandenburg Gate. Again, using our superior nautical training we managed to find a bar serving 100 types of German beer to help us appreciate the spectacle. On our way back to the hotel we met up with the remnants of the British contingent who must have been relying on GPS as they missed the bar!

The Area 1 meeting proved a great success with the chance to revive old friendships and make new ones. Thanks to the German fleet for organising an interesting and action packed meeting.

Next year it is Viva España! Watch out for details of the Area 1 Meeting in Alicante in 2017, timed for the start of the Volvo Tall Ships Race.

Robin Sudlow

Please remember to send all your news, photographs and stories in whatever form to the editor by mail or at andre@hawryliw.plus.com as this newsletter will only be as good as you make it.