

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - QUEENHITHE WARD CLUB

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 3RD MAY 2007

My first vote of thanks must be to all the members who have supported me so faithfully for the past 12 months, making my year as Chairman a very special one for me. I have got to know so many of you and have made some good friends along the way. I do hope you have enjoyed the programme of events that I offered to you as Chairman.

In deciding on my programme I tried to get a good mix of day and evening visits, some low cost, some relatively expensive and to ring the changes by choosing venues that I thought Queenhithe had not visited before as a group.

My first visit last June was a Tour of the Mansion House. The visit was so over-subscribed that Vicky at the Mansion House was kind enough to allow a second visit on July 6.

One of our members, David Wright, is a Master Mariner and had always promised me that luncheon on HQS "Wellington" could be arranged for Queenhithe. Accordingly, on 21 July, on a perfect summer day, a full complement of 100 members and guests enjoyed a very happy afternoon aboard ship on the Thames. One of our members, Gordon Sell, was 90 that day and was thrilled to be presented with a bottle of his favourite tippie. We were sad to learn of his death later in the year.

This was a special year for Her Majesty the Queen - her 80th birthday and to celebrate this a birthday exhibition of her jewellery and the dresses worn during her long reign was held. I booked the private evening tour of Buckingham Palace with some trepidation as the cost was high. In the event, 60 members enjoyed the guided tour and I had to disappoint a further 20. The evening meal at The Spaghetti House was in stark contrast to the luxury of the Palace but great fun.

One of our members was very keen for me to arrange a tour of Smithfield Market and, again, I have to thank one of our members, John Absalom, for doing this. Ian & I got up at 3.45 am on 13

September to join 25 others at 6 am for what was a fascinating insight into the activities of our premier meat market. My congratulations to all those courageous people who left their beds at such an ungodly hour!

The Member of Parliament for Chelsea & Westminster very kindly agreed to host a Dinner in The House of Commons for Queenhithe in October. It was a beautiful evening and we were able to take our pre-dinner drinks on the Terrace. The meal was excellent and that combined with the speeches that followed made for a very pleasant, relaxed occasion. The only down-side was the dining room allocated to us could only accommodate 54 diners.

We managed to squeeze in 56 members and guests into Bevis Marks, the oldest synagogue in London, to hear a very amusing and interesting talk on the history of the synagogue and on the settlement of the Jewish population in London. We then had a taste of kosher food with dinner in the Bevis Marks restaurant. A rather expensive evening for the Rodger household as Ian smashed his front teeth on the glass door of the restaurant and we are still waiting to be refunded the £800 repair bill from the Insurance Company!

Our final event of 2006 was the Toy and Carol Service at St. James Garlickhythe Church, held jointly again with Vintry and Dowgate Wards Club. Our President, Alderman Gordon Haines arranged for a small band from the Salvation Army to play at the Carol Service and to distribute to needy children in London all the presents that Queenhithe and Vintry members had distributed round the Crib. It was a very moving experience to see the generosity of all those who came to the service.

On to 2007. One of our members had asked me if I could arrange a tour of the Art Collection of The Mansion House and this Vicky scheduled for January 26. Inevitably, due to the popularity of this event, I had to ask Vicky for a second visit on 2 February. The curator, Vivian, gave us two absolutely enthralling tours of the Collection.

February saw us at The Foundling Museum, a real insight in the social conditions that existed when Thomas Coram was alive. Even

today the Society still has work to do. Afterwards we enjoyed a delicious Moroccan Tagine lunch at the Museum café.

For the final event of my Chairmanship I chose a Backstage Tour of The Royal Opera House. Again, I had to book a second tour. Thanks to our President's wife, Caroline, we were also privileged to be taken round the Wardrobe Department. We had a good lunch at the Amphitheatre Restaurant at the ROH, with the second party imbibing considerably more wine than the first group who were very restrained!

This has been a very busy year with lots to organise and I have here to thank Ian, my Social Secretary, for all his support and hard work. Only those who have held this office really know how much time and effort is involved.

In 2006 Queenhithe entered the 21st Century with the design of our Website under the direction of our Webmaster, Nigel Primrose. It can be visited at www.queenhitheward.org.

Twelve months ago a Sub-Committee of myself, Ian, Nigel and Peter, with Ann Ball in the Chair, was formed to organise the 75th Anniversary River Cruise on June 27th, when we will be joined by the Lord and Lady Mayoress. All the plans are now coming to fruition and everything is in place for what will be a memorable day in the life of the Club.

I am delighted to report that our Ward Deputy, Alastair King, has expressed to me his intention of taking a more active interest in the affairs of the Club. He is applying for membership and plans to join us on The River Cruise.

Due to ill-health Audrey and Terry Chalcraft are retiring as Treasurer and Hon. Archivist. They are not fit enough to join us tonight but to thank them for their years of service and loyalty, on behalf of the Club I have bought Audrey a £30 Book Token and Terry, a keen gardener, a £30 Garden Centre Voucher.

Finally, my thanks to the Officers and Committee Members for their hard work during the year. And, of course, a special vote of thanks to our President, Alderman Gordon Haines and Caroline who have always shown tremendous interest in Queenhithe and given enormous support, despite their very busy schedules.

Thank you all very much.