

TSCC



Thames Scout Cruising Club Newsletter No.118

December 2021

Chairman's Log



As Kylie Minogue once chanted to great success, *Lucky, lucky, lucky; I should be so lucky!* And so it was for us in late August with our Sunday afternoon picnic at Painshill Park, and more recently with our Bath and Bristol Getaway. When a dry

day is critical for success, there's always risk and uncertainty in our green and pleasant land! It's the kind of uncertainty that causes younger event organisers to go prematurely grey! However, on both occasions the Gods were unbelievably kind.

At Painshill Park, in a gloriously spacious open-air setting shielded by surrounding trees, we relaxed and enjoyed mellifluous music whilst gently imbibing whatever tippie we had brought. In the interval there was ample time to enjoy our picnics and catch up with friends whom we had rarely seen in recent times. We were blessed with a warm and windless day – and even the sun put in a respectable appearance. All in all, we couldn't have been much luckier.

And then there was Bath and Bristol. In the days prior to the event, the forecast was unremittingly dire. Rain, rain, and yet more rain – with lots of wind and occasional lightning for good measure! Just what you want when you are looking forward to a long-awaited getaway with numerous opportunities to explore the streets on foot. But amazingly there was scarce a spot of the wet stuff. Some of us went on a fascinating guided walking tour of Bath and guess what, not a hint of rain until the moment that the tour was ended. And the following day, when exploring Bristol's historic harbourside, the forecast thunderstorm was no more than a swiftly passing heavy shower – in fact, the sun was in the sky for almost the whole day. Yes, on our final evening we had to contend with rain and a lot of wind when walking to and from the restaurant, but that was about the height of it. Lucky, lucky, lucky!

We could not have been more lucky! Until, that is, our return to Esher when the heavens opened just when we needed to retrieve our baggage and get it to our cars. But Mike, our fantastic coach driver, was as wonderful as ever, running back and forth twixt coach and cars laden with our bags. As you will hear elsewhere in this newsletter, the getaway appears to have been a great success and my thanks go to my wonderful wife for her relentless pursuit of the dreaded detail in which the devil always lies!

By the time you read this Newsletter we will hopefully have enjoyed a terrific annual dinner at Leatherhead Golf Club and we will be looking forward to our festive pre-Christmas party at Claygate Village Hall. We hope to see you there.

Since this is our last Newsletter before the turn of the year, may I take this opportunity to thank our fantastic Committee for yet another outstanding year despite the obvious challenges.

It is coming up to five years since I took over as Chairman and that is more than long enough. I will be standing down at the next AGM so if there is someone you would like to nominate as Chairman for the next 12 months (no greater commitment required) then please propose them when you receive the nomination form.

As I sign off from this, my last Chairman's Log, may I wish you and your family a wonderful Christmas and a happy, healthy year ahead.

Mark

IN THIS ISSUE:

Jazz & Picnic at Painshill.

The Christmas Tree

Who is Father Christmas?

Bath and Bristol Getaway

Annual Dinner

Photo Competition



TSCC is affiliated to the ATYC and the River Thames Society.

Cover Photo: ISAMBARD KINGDOM BRUNEL (Photo: Mike Fowler)

Jazz and Picnic at Painshill



On the 28th August we enjoyed another rewarding day in the picturesque Painshill Landscape Gardens. We were entertained by the Sarah Jane Eveleigh Jazz Quartet in the Amphitheatre with refreshment from the Cork Occasions bar. This Jazz Quartet has built a strong reputation over the past few years with their exciting and varied repertoire and captivating performances. Sarah Jane has a beautiful voice and we were treated to a wonderful array of jazz and Latin standards as well as reworkings of some contemporary classics.



The Christmas Tree



One of the great associations with Christmas is the Christmas tree, whether it be a real tree cut down or dug up and brought indoors, or one of those modern plastic trees that may even have built-in I.e.d. lights. How did the Christmas tree tradition originate?

The Christmas tree has its origins in the Winter Solstice, or the Shortest Day (23rd December). In ancient cultures, plants and trees that remained green all year had a

special meaning for people in the winter because they symbolised life continuing from one year to the next. Many ancient people believed that the sun was a god and that winter came every year because the sun god had become sick and weak and they celebrated the solstice because it meant that at last the sun god would begin to get well again. Evergreen boughs reminded them of all the green plants that would grow again when the sun god was strong and summer would return.

Early Romans marked the solstice with a feast called Saturnalia in honour of Saturn, the god of agriculture. The Romans knew that the solstice meant that soon, farms and orchards would be green and fruitful and to mark the occasion, they decorated their homes and temples with evergreen boughs. In Northern Europe the Druids, the priests of the ancient Celts, also decorated their temples at the Winter Solstice or Yule Time with evergreen boughs as a symbol of everlasting life. The Vikings in Scandinavia thought that evergreens were the special plant of the sun god, Balder. These ideas are clearly the origin of having an evergreen holly wreath on the front door of a house at Christmas.

The Christmas tree tradition as we now know it started in Germany in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built a Christmas Light, a small pyramid-like frame, usually

decorated with evergreen branches with a candle on top, as a symbol of the birth of Christ as the Light of the World. A widely held belief which is at least plausible is that Martin Luther (1483 – 1546), the Protestant reformer, first added lighted candles to a tree. Walking toward his home one winter evening, he was awed by the brilliance of the stars twinkling amidst the evergreen fir trees. To recapture the scene for his family, he cut down a fir tree and took it home. Once inside, he attached small lighted candles to its branches and said that it would be a symbol of the beautiful Christmas sky.

The tradition of having Christmas trees indoors in Britain started with a sketch in a December 1848 edition of the Illustrated London News that showed Queen Victoria and her family standing in a room with their children grouped around a Christmas tree. The tree had lighted candles on it and was clearly a tradition that Prince Albert had brought with him from his Saxe-Coburg home. Queen Victoria was very popular with her subjects and this sketch started a trend for illuminated Christmas trees among wealthy people who wished to emulate her and be fashionable.

Knowing how well evergreen branches burn in a fire because of the oil that they contain, I dread to think of the fire hazard associated with having lighted candles on evergreen trees indoors. Thomas Edison invented the light bulb in 1879 and the change to having electric lights on Christmas trees can be ascribed to one of his assistants. Electricity brought about the possibility of outdoor Christmas lights, and illuminated Christmas trees began to appear in outdoor public places towards the end of the 19th century.

The Norway spruce is the traditional species used to decorate homes in Britain. This was a native species in the British Isles before the last Ice Age, but died out and was reintroduced here before the 1500s. Christmas trees generally take six to eight years to grow to the size that are sold for domestic use.

In German, a fir tree is a *Tannenbaum* and many people have heard of the traditional Christmas song/carol 'O *Tannenbaum*' or 'O Christmas Tree' in English. In Germany it is very popular at Christmastime. The tune and original lyrics were a traditional Silesian folk-song and the modern lyrics were written in 1824 by a Leipzig organist and composer, Ernst Anschütz. Strangely, the lyrics do not actually refer to Christmas, or describe a decorated Christmas tree, instead they refer to the fir's evergreen quality through the seasons as a symbol of constancy and faithfulness. You could say that it is not a carol, just a popular Christmas song.

Tony Scott

Who is Father Christmas?

Father Christmas is based upon the legends surrounding the life of St Nicholas, of whom very little is known with certainty. Tradition says that he was born in 270 in Patara in modern-day Turkey, of Greek parents, and became Bishop of Myra, a Mediterranean port city, now known as Demre, also in Turkey. It is likely that he took part in the Council of Nicaea in 325. St Nicholas died on 6th December 343 aged 73.



St Nicholas has long been regarded as the patron saint of children. The story goes that there was a man who had three young daughters but was too poor to be able to provide them with marriage dowries. They were able to marry when young Bishop Nicholas at night secretly delivered three bags of gold to their indebted father.

In the 13th century, St Nicholas became the patron saint of children, to whom he gave presents on his Feast Day, 6th December. This tradition continued until the 16th century when the Reformation brought an opposition in many countries to the veneration of saints. The custom of giving gifts to children at Christmas as an alternative to giving them on the Feast of St Nicholas was promoted by Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) to focus the interest of the children on Christ. Luther suggested the *Christkind* (Christ child) as the bringer of gifts, and this was initially taken up in parts of northern Europe. England tended to retain the St Nicholas gift tradition until the 1640s when Oliver Cromwell's Puritans banned the veneration of saints. In Catholic parts of Europe, particularly in what is now southern Germany and Austria the original tradition was maintained and children were given presents from 'Sint Niklaus' on 6th December. No presents were given at Christmas, which was solely a Church Feast.

In virtually the whole of northern Europe, the original St Nicholas tradition soon returned. The tradition of giving presents to children on 6th December was certainly the practice in northern Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, even during the war, as I heard first-hand some years ago from a German friend of mine. It would appear that this tradition continues to the present day in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany at least.

We happened to be in Aachen in northern Germany on 6th December about 20 years ago on a TSCC Christmas markets trip and saw a man with a long white beard resplendently dressed as a Bishop with mitre and crosier, on the footpath outside a shop, handing out little treats to children passing by with their parents. This was clearly an advertising/publicity gimmick but it is the only time that I have seen the traditional 'Sint Niklaus'

In England in the religiously more liberal days of the Restoration period (1660s) the custom of giving gifts to children on the Feast of St Nicholas returned. In

the 18th century the giving of gifts to children moved to Christmas and was linked to bringing gifts to the Christ-child in the stable. The gift-bringer took many forms and in the middle to late 19th century the German 'Sint Niklaus' became the English 'Santa Claus'. All religious connections were removed, the bishop's robes were replaced and the image of Santa Claus became standardised as a jolly man in a red suit with white fur trim in a reindeer-drawn sleigh bringing presents for children in the middle of the night.

Tony Scott

BATH and BRISTOL *Getaway*

18th October

By **Mary Chapman** (Mark's cousin who joined us for the trip)

Mark asked me to write an article about the TSCC's Autumn Getaway in Bath and Bristol. Dreaded memories of being compelled to produce a composition following school outings came flooding back!! Never mind, this was not a school visit and with any



luck nobody will be marking my work out of 10. However, there was one similarity – my companion on this getaway was my friend Mary (yes, another Mary!) who has remained a dear friend since our primary school days together when we went on school trips together and drove our teacher mad with our incessant talking! Mary now lives in Wales and I live in Suffolk so the pandemic had meant we had not seen much of each other for quite a while. Therefore, the chance to meet up halfway(ish) and enjoy a little holiday was too good to miss.

I'd met very few members of the TSCC before and Mary had met none. No worries on that front as we both received a warm welcome from our friendly fellow travellers, including Mike our superb coach driver for the duration.

On a misty Monday morning the coach left Esher bang on time, despite some anxieties about notorious latecomers, and arrived in Bath within minutes of the time noted on the detailed itinerary, prepared by Jackie and Mark. We all piled into the reception of our home for two nights: The Francis Hotel, a lovely, beautifully decorated boutique hotel in a prime position for all the attractions that Bath has to offer. Lunch of sandwiches, salads and chips awaited us in a downstairs function room.



Lunch over and all back on the coach we enjoyed an excellent guided tour of Bath. Our guide, Rodger, provided an informative and lively commentary whilst at the same time ensuring coach driver Mike kept to the route and didn't fall foul of any one way or other traffic restrictions.

The coach paused its journey for us to take a short walk to view the Royal Crescent and, assisted by Rodger's descriptions, to imagine ourselves there in the 18th century when the outlook had been open countryside. After the tour we had the rest of the afternoon to ourselves. Many of our fellow travellers visited attractions such as the Jane Austen Centre, The Roman Baths, The Assembly Rooms etc. Mary and I however couldn't resist the allure of the shops of Bath – this would never have been allowed on a school trip!! That evening, fortified by drinks in the hotel bar, we headed out on foot to the Amarone restaurant for dinner. The building occupied by the restaurant was once home to Juliana Popjoy, the mistress of Beau Nash, the 18th century dandy and one time Master of Ceremonies for Bath. Beau Nash also lived there himself for a while after he lost his own grander Bath residence through gambling debts.

The following morning, we boarded the coach for a guided tour of Bristol. Rodger joined us again to provide a very entertaining commentary both during the journeys to and from Bristol and throughout the two-hour drive around the city. The coach made a couple of stops for us to get out and brave an almost gale force wind to view the spectacular Clifton Suspension Bridge and Avon Gorge. Close attention was paid to Rodger's commentary to try and fill in a few blanks on the Bath and Bristol quiz sheet which Jackie had handed to all of us the previous day.

Back in Bath for the afternoon of the second day, we had more time to ourselves. Mary and I resisted the shops and joined a free, two-hour walking tour of Bath led by one of the Mayor of Bath's Honorary Guides – on this occasion it was John, a retired tour

operator who had led parties around far-flung parts of the world. Very good it was too. To fortify ourselves after the walk and to dodge a rain shower, we took tea at a café on the famous Pulteney Bridge and whilst watching the river Avon flow by, we were witness to a very loud and aggressive fracas on the street outside – what would Jane Austen have thought??

Dinner that night was taken at the Martini restaurant which John, our afternoon tour guide, assured us was a very good choice (well chosen, Mark and Jackie!). We all arrived a bit bedraggled as the heavens had opened just as we set out to walk from the hotel to the restaurant. It was a lovely, convivial evening and was made even lovelier when Mary and I were declared joint winners of the quiz together with Celia and Andrew.



The next morning, luggage loaded, we boarded the coach to travel to Bristol for the last day of our break. We all alighted outside the M Shed on the floating harbour. Mary and I spent some time in the M Shed, a museum of life in Bristol through the ages, and then we headed out of the harbour area and up the steep College Green hill to the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery for some art appreciation, a saunter round the gift shop and tea and cake. Then down the hill to Bristol Cathedral which we'd almost reached when the wind whipped up and the heavens opened! Mar displayed her athletic prowess by sprinting across the College Green to reach the Cathedral in remarkable time. I unfortunately had to chase my hat in the opposite direction, much to the amusement of a party of school kids! However, the Cathedral was worth the effort, with some beautiful stained-glass windows commemorating the home front workers and the heroes of World War II. The rain abated and amazingly the sun appeared as we returned to the floating harbour and took the harbourside walk to Brunel's restored SS Great Britain. Our guided tour provided a really fascinating insight

into the world's first iron-hulled passenger liner and a fittingly, splendid finale to the Bath and Bristol Getaway.

Mary and I thoroughly enjoyed the mini-break and we very much appreciated the friendly welcome we received from TSCC members. Mark and Jackie had meticulously researched and organised the getaway to ensure maximum enjoyment and minimum hassle, for which we give them both a very big THANK YOU!

Mary Chapman

This article is from Joy Bell.



From start to finish the Bath and Bristol Getaway was brilliant. Mike our coach driver, who was with us for the entire three days, was cheerful and really helpful. A big thanks to Mike. We were very impressed with the Francis Hotel and its convenient central location. The rooms were spotless and the restaurant where we took breakfast was interestingly themed in a Spanish / North African style. We managed to avoid almost all of the forecast rain although it decided to pelt down as we walked to our last night meal at Martini. It did not however dampen our spirits....far from it. The wine was flowing and the food was excellent.

Although we had been to Bath before, it was many years ago and there were plenty of areas that we had not previously explored. It's strange that the Pulteney bridge looks amazing from the front but when you walk round the back you wouldn't even know you were actually on a bridge. So many of the buildings with beautiful facades are in fact very plain at the back.

We'd never been to Bristol before and we saw a Banksy for the first time. We also saw the now infamous Colston statue in the M Shed museum. The Street Art exhibition at the M Shed was fantastic. It may not be everyone's cup of tea, but we learnt a lot about the key events in Bristol that were intertwined with the development of the street art and the groups of youngsters from different areas who banded together to create it. What started as graffiti evolved into genuine artworks that have now become an important feature of the city.

We ended our getaway with a guided tour around the SS Great Britain. The restoration of what came back to Bristol as a rotting iron hulk was amazing, especially the beautiful first-class dining and function area. Chris certainly seemed to enjoy it!

Jackie and Mark did us proud with nothing left to chance...we are in awe of their organizational skills and it is all thanks to both of them for making it possible. We really appreciated all the care they put into ensuring that everything went without a hitch.

Joy Bell

And finally, this article is from Mike Fowler

After several setbacks, our autumn getaway finally got away. The weather forecast for our three days was somewhere between awful and dreadful!

Undeterred, we left Sandown Park on the Monday at 9.00am with our driver Mike at the wheel and by midday we had arrived at the Francis Hotel Bath where we enjoyed a light lunch. No time to hang around! Off for a coach tour of Bath. Our guide was Rodger, who gave an excellent commentary and an in-depth explanation of the history of the many Georgian properties and other important sights around the town. All of this before 2.30pm when we finally checked into our rooms!

We were free to roam during the afternoon with an abundance of places to visit – Roman baths, Bath Abbey and the Jane Austin museum to mention just a few.

The weather had been much better than expected with just an occasional slight drizzle but that soon changed and some of us got very wet! Fortunately, in the evening, our restaurant Amarone was nearby and we had a most enjoyable time.

At 10.00am on Tuesday we were off for a two-hour tour of Bristol with our guide Rodger who, as well as giving us a comprehensive commentary, was guiding our driver Mike through the streets of Bristol. The weather was kind and we saw a good deal of the city including a 'Banksy' before setting off to see stunning views of the gorge and the Clifton suspension bridge.

We returned to Bath for lunch and afterwards we had more free time to explore the different attractions. We went on an excellent free walking tour covering the history of Bath. Just as the walk had finished, the heavens opened! Another enjoyable evening, this time at the Martini restaurant (umbrellas essential).



Wednesday morning at 10.15, after our group photo, we left for a day in Bristol.

We were dropped off at M shed just before 11.00am. The M shed is a museum exploring the history of Bristol and that is where the Colston statue is currently on view. Within the immediate area there was plenty to do including a walk around the Matthew, (a replica of Cabot's 15th century boat),

a boat trip around the harbour, a visit to Bristol cathedral and in the afternoon a visit

to the SS Great Britain museum and the new 'Being Brunel' exhibition. The highlight was a private tour of SS Great Britain. We were met by Mr Brunel personally who showed us the ship as it would have been when it was operating the Australian run. We left for home around 4.45pm and were back at Sandown just in time for the weather to give us back the extra rain that we should have had over the last three days!

A big thank you to Jackie and Mark for a brilliantly organised getaway and a special mention to George for looking after the defibrillator.

Mike Fowler





ANNUAL DINNER

This year's Annual Dinner was held at Leatherhead Golf Club. This was a great success with good food, good service, and a very convivial atmosphere.

During the evening, Rita Scott was presented with her 30 years Scout Service Award – congratulations Rita, a wonderful record.



Les Holdaway was celebrating his Birthday for which Jackie had prepared a mouth-watering cake.

Rosie Sowter did a splendid job of organising the raffle which raised £275 to be made available for our TSCC Grants.



Finally, all members were invited to vote for their favourite photo for the Ray Andrew's Trophy. This year, for the first time, we had a 'draw' with equal votes going to Elaina Mears and Judy Bowles. So, they will each hold the trophy for six months.

Congratulations to our winners and thanks to all those who submitted an entry.

The evening concluded with a slide presentation that reminded us of all the fun we did have together during the course of the year despite the exceptional circumstances.

The Ray Andrews Trophy

Winners 2021



Elaina Mears



Judy Bowles







You are invited to

Christmas with the TSCC

at Claygate Village Hall

Sunday 5th December at 2.00pm

Your festive fare includes:

Mulled wine on arrival

followed by:

Roast turkey with trimmings

Seasonal dessert

Tea or coffee

followed by:

Festive Fun and Games

to put you firmly in the Christmas spirit!

Cost: £14.50 per person

Bring your own drinks and glasses

Attire: Preferably Festive!

Prize for the most notable Christmas headgear!

Secret Santa

Ladies to bring a gift for a lady, wrapped in red paper

Gentlemen to bring a gift for a man, wrapped in green paper

Maximum cost per gift £5.00

RSVP to George Barber

Payment to the TSCC in the normal way Ref: Christmas

O Come, O Come and join us for all the festive fun!

TSCC Programme of Events for 2022

All dates and events are subject to change

TSCC AGM at Ajax Water Activities Centre	Sunday 16 th January
TSCC, WMC, BBC Skittles Match at WMC	Saturday 5 th February
Fitting Out Lunch at Glenmore House	Sunday 6 th March
Singing in the Rain at New Victoria Theatre, Woking	Wednesday 30 th March
Spring Bulb Field Cruise	Friday 29 th April – Tuesday 3 rd May
100 th Anniversary Celebration at Little Compton (TSCC 30 th plus QE2 70 th)	Sunday 12 th June
Thames Cruise	Friday 8 th – Tuesday 12 th July
Summer Outdoor Event	August
Middle Temple Visit plus Lunch	Early September
Canal du Midi Cruise	Friday 23 rd – Fri 30 th September
Race Night with Fish and Chips at Ajax	Wednesday 26 th October
Pre-Christmas Getaway in Canterbury	Tuesday 15 th – Thursday 17 th November
Festive Annual Dinner	Early December

Thames Scout Cruising Club Grants

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR SCOUTS/GUIDES

TSCC is always looking for Scouting/Guiding projects which need financial support. If your local Group is in need of funds for specific projects ask them to write a letter to our Secretary giving full details.

Our Committee will be pleased to consider all requests.

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Visit our Website: www.tsc.org.uk

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