

Across the pond....

THE QE2 EXPERIENCE

About the middle of October, we received a small brochure from a local travel agent advertising a Cunard package return trip to the USA for Christmas shopping. The package included a flight to Washington D.C., returning to the UK on the QE2. 3 nights in Washington and 6 nights on the QE2.

Although Daisy and I had considered giving up on long haul trips, we nevertheless went along to the travel agent, primarily out of curiosity. Well, you know how the cat fared with curiosity! The basic quoted price would have meant the lowest deck on QE2 and we thought that when on such a ship we would do it in reasonable style. We just hoped it would be worth it - and so - On November 18th. we flew with Virgin Atlantic to Washington and were greatly impressed with this airline which is equal to any of the top operators, including B.A.

The hotel in Washington was excellent, and the weather was good too, so we were off to a fine start

Shopping? No, there was too much of other interest. We had not been to the States for 18 years, and when were in Washington last time we were unable to visit the White House so, we remedied that. At the end of our stay in Washington we were taken to the departure pier in New York where the QE2 was berthed up for a late afternoon departure. We disembarked from the coach and our luggage was unloaded to take a different a different route to our cabin. (On QE2, whatever grade, cabins are called "State Rooms")

After a few exit formalities in the departure hall, we were met by a member of the crew, who escorted us to our cabin where we were introduced to our cabin stewardess, and relaxed for a while before venturing out on to the promenade deck to watch proceedings.

At 16.45 QE2 sailed, unassisted, and proceeded along the Hudson River where we had the most marvellous panoramic view of New York, ablaze with lights. Passing the Statue of Liberty, we then headed east into the Atlantic.

Back to the cabin to unpack and enjoy a bottle of champagne and strawberries - compliments of Cunard. We were now on our way for the Atlantic crossing, first sailing north parallel to the US Canadian coast's far as Nova Scotia before taking the Great Circle route eastwards.

Dinner was our first meal on board and we realised that we would have to discipline ourselves because there was so much to choose from and all available around the clock.

There was an air of luxury everywhere and we were going to enjoy the journey. With six full days to fill, we found plenty to keep us occupied and entertainment in abundance. There was something to suit all tastes. Apart from top shows by well-known artists, there were talks by the chief engineer, the navigation officer and a retired Concorde pilot. Activities for young and old are always available and even a special room for computer enthusiasts.

Evening dress was compulsory on 4 nights -. I had to shake the moths out of mine! On one evening we were introduced to the captain at a cocktail party, when the flash photography was continuous. Evenings apart, informal dress was the order of the day.

Whatever cabins or deck class you had, you were allowed to go anywhere on the ship except for the top deck and the engine room. One other thing that we liked was the policy of no tipping. Instead, 15% was added to all purchases!

SOME TECHNICAL INFO. – QE2 - Gross tonnage - 70,327. Length - 963 feet. Width – 105 feet. Cruising speed - 28.5 knots. Approximately 1,025 crewmembers to cater for 1,500 passengers. She is diesel electric powered with seven units, five of which are in use. The chief engineer told us that there was enough electric power to supply the Isle of Man – a thought for her eventual retirement! QE2 is 29 years old, in very good shape and expected to go on for another 3 to 4 years when there may be a new one, even larger!

Well, how can one sum up such a wonderful experience? We cruised at 25.2 knots average and that equates with almost 30 mph. We had a moderate swell most of the way but the ride was most comfortable. Absolute luxury – bank balance dented but well worth it. It's a beautiful ship.

I hope my story has been of some interest and I will apologise to anyone out there who has travelled on QE2. Full marks to Cunard for first class organisation.

Hope you all had a great Christmas and Daisy and I send our warmest wishes for 1999.

Alec G8GF

(thanks to Gordon for typing it up!)



Year 2000

YEAR 2000 (Y2K) PARABLE submitted by Penny Pennington

There was once a COBOL programmer in the mid to late 1900s. For the sake of this story, we'll call him Jack. After years of being taken for granted and treated as a technological dinosaur by all the UNIX programmers and Client/Server programmers and Web site developers, Jack was finally getting some respect. He'd become a private consultant specialising in Year 2000 conversion. He was working short-term assignments for prestigious companies, travelling all over the world on different assignments. He was working 70 and 80 and even 90 hour weeks, but it was worth it.

Several years of this relentless, mind-numbing work had taken its toll on Jack. He had problems sleeping and began having anxiety dreams about the year 2000. It had reached a point where even the thought of the year 2000 made him nearly violent. He must have suffered some sort of breakdown, because all he could think about was how he could avoid the year 2000 and all that came with it.

Jack decided to contact a company that specialised in cryogenics. He made a deal to have himself frozen until March 15, 2000. This was a very expensive process and totally automated. He was thrilled. The next thing he would know is he'd wake up in the year 2000; after the New Year celebrations and computer debacles; after the leap day. Nothing else to worry about except getting on with his life.

He was put into his cryogenic receptacle, the technicians set the revive date, he was given injections to slow his heartbeat to a bare minimum, and that was that.

The next thing that Jack saw was an enormous and very modern room filled with excited people. They were all shouting, "I

can't believe it!" and "It's a miracle!" and "He's alive!" There were cameras (unlike any he'd ever seen) and equipment that looked like it came out of a science fiction movie.

Someone who was obviously a spokesperson for the group stepped forward. Jack couldn't contain his enthusiasm. "It is over?" he asked. "Is 2000 already here? Are all the millennial parties and promotions and crises all over and done with?"

The spokesman explained that there had been a problem with the programming of the timer on Jack's cryogenic receptacle, it hadn't been year 2000 compliant. It was actually 8,000 years later, not the year 2000. But the spokesman told Jack that he shouldn't get excited; someone important wanted to speak to him.

Suddenly, a wall-sized projection screen displayed the image of a man who looked very much like Bill Gates. This man was Prime Minister of Earth. He told Jack not to be upset. That this was a wonderful time to be alive. That there was world peace and no more starvation. That the space program had been reinstated and there were colonies on the moon and on Mars. That technology had advanced to such a degree that everyone had virtual reality interfaces which allowed them to contact anyone else on the planet, or to watch any entertainment, or to hear any music recorded anywhere.

"That sounds terrific," said Jack. "But, I'm curious. Why is everybody so interested in me?"

"Well," said the Prime Minister, "The year 10,000 is just around the corner, and it says in your files that you know COBOL."

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(submitted by Bob G4XOM)

THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL AWARDS were presented to the following members at the **1998 AGM**-

THE SENIOR TROPHY to **Gordon G0TZV** for work as Hon. Sec.

THE JUNIOR TROPHY to **Brian M1BKV** for his enthusiasm since joining the Society.

THE G8GF ROSEBOWL to **Dr Bob G4VPE** for the time and effort put into compiling the necessary documents for the move to Old Swinford Hospital.

THE NATIONAL FIELD DAY TROPHY to **Eric G7JWJ** for his enthusiastic support in running JOTA and hosting most of the committee meetings.

THE BRISTOL TROPHY to **Eric G3IVQ** for his continued support in his fifty first year as a member of the Society.

WILL HOLDERS PLEASE ARRANGE FOR THE RETURN OF THE TROPHIES IN TIME FOR THE PRESENTATION AT THE 1999 AGM?

No time to write any more this month. Off on hols (Back for the AGM!) First class talk by Frank G0RXO. 73 Gordon

FOR SALE

B&D Power Plane 1251CN £20.00
Heavy Duty Saw 7inch blade. £50.00.
Bill G3HMD 01562 886912

IBM 386 SX: Keyboard, mouse and colour monitor
Offers to Geoffrey Smith 01384 873 967.

Presidents Annual Dinner

To held at The Hagley County Club

Thursday 11th March 1999

please contact Gordon or Bob for further information and bookings.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MONDAY 25TH. MARCH

Notice of the above meeting was published in the February issue of "Starlite".

The rule change to be proposed under Item 11 is as follows:-

It is proposed

PART 1

"That the Society creates a new officer post of Vice President"

PART 2

"... who will normally become President the following year"

Proposed by Dr. Bob Derricott G4VPE

BACKGROUND

The Vice President would, with his agreement, undertake a specific role in the Society during his period of office, e.g. look after the meetings programme, organise Field Days etc.

The election of a Vice President would ensure continuity and overcome the problems that may occur when a President incumbent is unable or unwilling to continue in office. The Vice President would also represent the President in his (the President's) absence.

The adoption of this rule would mean, if both parts are accepted, that the President would normally only remain in office for a period of one year; but there would be no reason why he/she could not be elected again at a future date.

Bob Derricott G4VPE

SECRETARY'S NOTE

Hon. Treasurer has advised me that all Members must be advised of the above-proposed change in the Rules in advance of

the AGM.

The adoption of the proposal would also necessitate a change to the following rules

(V) Administration and Management

Rule 17. Officers

"The Officers of the Society shall be President, Hon. Treasurer and Hon Secretary, who shall be appointed at the Annual General Meeting each year."

Rule 18 Management

"The Society shall be managed by a Committee comprising of the three officers referred to in Rule 17, together with a minimum of three ordinary members elected on a representative basis as decreed from time to time at the Annual General Meeting each year, the number of additional ordinary members to be at the discretion of the President. The retiring President shall have a right to serve on the Committee in the year following his/her term of office."

Gordon Bryant Hon. Sec. G0TZV

Internet sites and Amateur Radio

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY (HYPERLINK <http://www.mcc.ac.uk/radio/>)

AMATEUR RADIO INFORMATION Resources (HYPERLINK <http://user.itl.net/~equinox/>)

HAM CALL BOOK (HYPERLINK <http://www.ecst.csuchico.edu/~stefanis/call.html>)

RSGB (HYPERLINK <http://www.rsgb.org>)

All courtesy of "Airtime"

And [www.beaucoup](http://www.beaucoup.com). Search engines

And www.grz.com US Call Book

P.S. I haven't had much success with these so far.

Gordon

Organ Projects and Amateur Radio

How time fly's a quarter of the way into the year and once again time for the AGM. It is a question weather there will be any changes for the committee for 1999/2000, the 98/99 committee have worked very hard over the last 12 months term of office what with setting up the club at Old Swinford and the 60th anniversary celebrations and the meal. Stourbridge has a record to be proud of, as I have found out from reports from other clubs in the area who are having difficulty in maintaining membership even to the point of reducing meeting to every other month, so I must give full praise to the committee's going back over the years for all their hard work. Long may the club continue, although I am not as active within the club as I should, StARS will always have my support.

Some members may of seen a report in the Express & Star of 8th Feb regarding my organ project. I have now sorted out a storage place and also a place to house the organ. This is still subject to discussion, but details will be revealed in next months edition. Once this has been sorted out it will be great deal of hard work to sort the organ out. But I and my friends see it as a challenge for the next few months and then the reward of hearing concerts will be given. At the end of Jan three fellow enthusiasts set out to Neath in South Wales to see a similar set up at a Private House. The organ was installed in a purpose designed building separate to the house. On a stop on route I took the opportunity to call CQ with my trusty hand held, no with its repaired aerial mount, however despite several CQ calls no reply was herd, yet again I wonder what the state of amateur radio is!

On a sad note you must of all seen and heard that JY1 King Hussein of Jordon who was not only a diplomat in keeping peace and stability in that part of the world, but also respected by all leaders of different counties world wide. He was also an ambassador to

amateur radio over the years with no visit to this country being complete with a trip to the RSGB HQ. He will be sadly missed by all, perhaps one of our members worked him some time. (*think Jim G4WAO has???* – ed)

Once again the main meeting of Feb was of great interest to me, especially with my forthcoming organ project! Thoughts went through my mind of my earlier days when I was active in the home construction field. As my father was foreman of a sheet metal department it was easy to construct the cases and anything else in that line. I could even notch the corners out beforehand and bend the metal using a hand press and could allow for the bends beforehand as well.

With the organ there is a lot of work to convert it from electromechanical to solid state. I have already cleared the shack out of much of the junk shown in last months picture, most of it ended up down the tip as it seemed to much hassle to try and sell it.

Unfortunately I did not make it to the thinking day on the air for the guides, other places to visit.....

73s Malcolm

Stars Meetings

The Shack is now open every Monday (except Bank Holidays) from around 7:15pm. ~ 10pm (approx)

The shack is also open every Wednesday's during term time from 7:15pm ~ 9pm.

Old Swinford Hospital

According to tradition the school was founded in 1667 by Thomas Foley, a successful industrialist. He called his school 'Hospital' the word which was often used at that time in connection with charity schools. He arranged for the 60 boys to be educated free, and apprenticed at 14 when they were provided with the apprentice's uniform. We are still sometimes known locally as the Blue Coat School. It was only in 1928 that boys at the school ceased to wear blue coats and corduroy breeches.

Under his will, Thomas Foley endowed the school with considerable lands and money. He laid down that his three sons and their descendants should always have places amongst the Trustees, or 'Feoffees' as he called them, who administered his generous endowments. The Foley family are still directly involved in the school today.

The income from the endowments is now primarily used to give financial assistance to parents who can not afford to pay all the fees. In addition there are funds for academic Scholarships and Exhibitions. The Feoffees also pay for additional features of a recreational nature.

There are 560 boys in the school, with a very strong Sixth Form of 200. Most boys enter at

11, from Primary or Independent Schools, but some of the boarding places are reserved for boys who enter at 13, mainly from Preparatory Schools. Boys also enter at Sixth Form level, and occasionally at other ages.

There is no charge for the cost of the academic education of a boy. The school became Grant Maintained in September 1989 and receives a 'per capita' grant from the department of education to cover teaching and academic costs. The Governors decide how to spend the grant on the educational side of the school.

The **staff/pupil ratio** is **1:13.6**. The **average class size** up to year 11 is **20** boys and for the **Sixth Form** it is **12** Boys.

The school is able to accept boys from any part of the British Isles or abroad, provided the boy himself is a British Citizen or British passport holder or at least one of his parents falls into this category.

reprinted from the internet site, which is

www.old_swinford.dudley.sch.uk

