

Around our Groups

- Abingdon *Meets most Mondays at The Flowing Well, Sunningwell Road, Sunningwell, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 6RB from 8:30pm*
- Andover *Meets every Tuesday The Anton Arms, Salisbury Road, Andover SP10 2JN from 8:30pm*
- Didcot *Meets every Thursday at The Fleur-De-Lys, 30 Main Road, East Hagbourne, Didcot, Oxon. OX11 9LN from 8:00pm*
- Fareham *Meets every Tuesday at The Fareham, 54 Trinity Street, Fareham, Hants. PO16 7SA from 8:30pm*
- Newbury *Meets every Friday at The Blue Ball, Greenham Road, Newbury RG14 7HY from 8:30 pm*
- Oxford *Meets every Tuesday at The Original Swan, Oxford Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2LF from 8:30pm*
- Reading *Meets every Thursday at The Warwick, 77 Kings Road, Reading RG1 3DD at 8:30pm*
- Slough, Windsor and Eton *Meets every Thursday at The College Arms , 55 High Street , Eton, Windsor SL4 6BL from 9:00pm*
- Soton Friends *Meets every Wednesday at Bar Risa, 2-4 High Street, Southampton SO14 2DH from 8:30pm*
- South Bucks *Meets every Wednesday at T.J O'Reillys, 61 Marlow Bottom Road, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 3NA from 8:30pm*
- Thatcham *Meets every Wednesday at The Red House, Andover Road, Highclere, Newbury, Berks. RG20 9PU from 8:45pm*

No group near you? If you would like to start a new group in your town please feel free to contact any member of the area committee who will be very willing to help.



Flying South



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December 2003

On 23rd August, Slough, Windsor & Eton 18 Plus group organised a riverboat trip, Maidenhead - Windsor and back. 21 members from 10 Plus groups met at Maidenhead Riverside for a cruise to Windsor aboard one of French Brothers' boats. We initially waved goodbye to area chairman Tina who stayed on the



riverside to round up the stragglers while the boat was turned round.

Our boat passed underneath a bridge designed by Brunel and having apparently the longest brick-built span in the world. It wasn't immediately obvious that it was a railway bridge as no trains were running but some of their traffic seemed to have transferred to the river.

Next we passed a riverside hotel where a wedding reception was under way, doubtless a memorable occasion in such grand surroundings. There was plenty of evidence of Eton College's rowing activities with two boathouses as well as an island activity centre being operated by them.

There were two locks on our stretch of the river; these were well looked after - the state of the vegetation would put most gardens to shame. The locks caused considerable delays owing to the amount of traffic and our boat had to wait for all the small ones to go through as it almost needed the lock to itself.

Having arrived at Windsor, we had lunch at the usual meeting place of the Slough, Windsor & Eton group, but there wasn't time to visit the castle which we resolved to do another time.

On the cruise back to Maidenhead, the skipper told us who owned the riverside houses - many well-known names from sport, music & retail. Gerald Ratner's old house was a nice one; I couldn't help thinking that one of his famous cheapo decanters would be a bit out of place there!

And so back to Maidenhead. Unfortunately, I was the only So'ton Friends member to attend; the others missed an enjoyable day.

Story: Rod Ormston Photo: Adrian Barnard



Southern Area of the National Federation of 18 Plus Groups of Great Britain. Editor, Steve Crothers, 8 Coromandel, Abingdon, Oxfordshire. OX14 5QG; stephen.crothers@ntlworld.com

National Greek Week

I would like to thank Mark Randall for organising a great holiday, a shame he was unable to attend.

The accommodation was good, especially for the money, quite what they considered you could self cater with on a single mini ring with two mugs I don't know. My compatriots managed to keep me away from the pizza most of the time all the same - rotters.

A nightly, or in the case of I suspect an alcohol induced colleague, knightly hunt for mossies was recommended and one of our party did get to look like a join the dots parchment. So much for the knight.

The island visited has still got turtles - just, despite the tourism to see them. I now have a photo of a turtle head breaking the water. The afternoon trip gives you the opportunity to go to a secluded beach offshore for a swim or purchase from a waterborne ice cream seller in addition to gassing turtles and ourselves with diesel fumes, you also get the opportunity to fall in when returning to shore!

Being the Greek islands boat trips make up many of the tours, we had a trip round the island where another of our party in the rather choppy weather that day made close acquaintance with the toiletry systems on board for an hour and a half. A trip round the blue caves where you get to go inside, the water's blue and that diesel's stronger than ever! The ship wreck was interesting too, we picked the boat with the shortest ramp naturally so the steep beach was gotten to via waist deep water.

A coach trip was taken around the villages, I get the impression electricity is not 100% reliable round there, the ice lolly I had was a whole new experience, vanilla essence ice on one side and tasteless dry ice cream mouse on the other with severely broken up candy coat. I think also some EEC rules re food standards haven't quite filtered that far inland either. I'm still here though.



The service was excellent, I actually found something I consider useful in the tack shops permeating the tourist section. You could clear the tourist areas with a walk and the airport despite subjective thought at the time was actually faster than Gatwick re luggage etc. Though in Gatwick you do have ample seating and don't need to stand in your neighbours pocket waiting nearly an hour for the bags. Many right up to release and prior to release movies were showing in many of the tavernas and eateries, though the quality of some was questionable, in the spirit of no damp cloths I shan't comment on a particular movie.

Would I go again? Yes. I believe the island has enough to offer two weeks of different excursions and experiences. The company of friends is also naturally enjoyable too.

So that was the Greek Week. Thanks again Mark.

Next Issue of Flying South

1st April 2004

Articles to editor please



nvtech.com



63rd Annual National Conference

24th - 25th April 2004

Britannia Hotel, Coventry

National Narrowboat Holiday

5th - 12th June 2004

The Avon Ring, £160



National Treasure Hunt

3rd July 2003

London

National Training Weekend

3rd - 5th September 2004



The 7th National Holiday Abroad Pefkos

18th - 25th September 2004

£359 per person. Deposit of £90 required

by 20 Jan 2004, balance by 1 Jul 2004

Coming Soon



*National Skiing Holiday
Sat 10 - Sat 17 January 2004
Bulgaria*

*Area Council Meeting
1st February 2004
Basingstoke*



*Slough Jets Ice Hockey
8th February 2004*

*Area Hedge Hop
21st February 2004*



*National Badminton Competition
28 February 2004
Magnet Leisure Centre, Maidehead*

*Brean Sands 2004
19th - 22nd March 2004
Weston-super-Mere
£48.50 (Deposit of £18.50 due 1st February)*



Eden Project, Cornwall

Southampton 18 Plus group recently attended the Eden project in Cornwall. It isn't just the increasing beauty of the gardens and displays of varied tropical and mediterranean plants there, but the increasingly hidden engineering of the project that amaze. There is there also the living proof of realised personal dreams and hard work to achieve goals, these can come true given the dedication,



ingenuity and good co-ordination of people. The 'Biomes' are undoubtedly the impressive part as the project is first entered, looking out on the viewing platform over the ex-gravel pits. This particular day was in gleaming sunlight to make a contrast to my previous experience through pools of ghostly mists. No matter what the temperature outside, the tropics is a t-shirt and shorts job with high humidity and high temperatures, additionally mist sprays wind their way through the jungle, the coolest part is up top in sunlight next to the high waterfall. Take the time to educate yourself, in among the astounding views there is plenty of information as to what all the plants there are used for commercially. Art also rears itself up in areas too, both as being in concert with its surroundings, as an educating tool and also simply in the surreal, but not overpoweringly so. The mediterranean biome is somewhat of a relief from the heat and humidity of the tropics allowing a far more conventional plant array. This is also the area many art performances are staged during visiting hours, though none were observed on this occasion. The restaurant is situated between the Biomes and is well lit and spacious as well as much external area given over to seating. Being sunken though it is also reasonably hidden from the rest of the gardens. Many interactive 'sculptures' exist in addition, my favourite being the cloud chamber. A cairn of local stone which you can enter, - bent if taller than 4' 6". Inside is seating in a taller room with a large white stone on the floor, a small gap in the roof is aimed at the general direction of the suns skyward traverse, the moving clouds are projected onto the white stone in the dark. This year was a fairly small affair organised quickly over a weekend. Next year should see the hiring of a minibus and luxury caravans for more participants over a longer time span and encompassing other attractions like the Lost Gardens of Heligan and Goonhilly. Needless to say the local pubs see many visits too. Look out for details.

Blackpool Weekend

On the August bank holiday 2003 four members of So'ton Friends group plus one from Reading ventured from Southampton to the seaside town of Blackpool.

We started early to try and keep ahead of heavy traffic, but alas a source of annoyance to motorists everywhere, Birmingham's infamous spaghetti junction again, proved to provide heavy traffic and introduce delay to journey.

Upon arrival accommodation proved a welcome sight for all concerned. Getting food and refreshment proved a small adventure as the locals did seem to want to send us in the wrong direction. After unpacking the purchases and the tin of corned beef, the subject of much discussion beforehand, the traveller rested. The tin of corned beef safely put in a kitchen cupboard, its final resting place for this trip.

Later on it was time to go out on the town and sample Blackpool nightlife. We all left our accommodation and headed for the pubs and clubs. It was quickly observed that this place had plenty of pubs but decent nightclubs a bit thin on the ground. After deciding on going into Yates's it was time for the first drinks round of many during the weekend. With a good crowd and decent music everyone started to relax (well nearly everyone!) and soak up the atmosphere. A few minutes later and it was time to attempt use of some southern charm on a couple of females that caught the eyes. Despite the best efforts of one member of the group in particular it became obvious there was no chance of striking it lucky this time.

The group left Yates's a little lighter and head for the next venue of the night, located close to where had come from this new venue proved to be buzzing with life. A few rounds later and everyone was having a good time even though some other customers were raising eyebrows with respect to the choice of 'clothes' being worn. A stop to get some novelty glow lights then it was time to head back and get rest for a new day ahead.

Saturday started with a trip to the Blackpool tower and its many attractions (aquarium, ballroom and circus). After a leisurely liquid lunch at the ballroom bar it was time to use our legs. Instantly upright and waking everyone left the ballroom to explore as other entertainment was on offer. After a brief stop to try and then discover a frankly boring dinosaur themed attraction it was time to try the main attraction. This being the experience of standing on viewing area atop the tower viewing the skyline 500ft up from ground level. Via a small lift packed as tightly with people as sardines are in a tin the journey began. It was straight up and within a couple of minutes our group has reached its destination. The view was spectacular and provided a good photograph opportunity, duly taken. The well advertised 'vertigo-inducing walk of faith' was found not to be much of a walk the single transparent glass panel when traversed did allow a view straight down to the ground. After a couple of minutes the group agreed it time to get back to ground level.

Southern Area Petanque



On Saturday 16th August 2003 an enthusiastic group from Southern had drinks and lunch at the Seagull public house in Porchester and then enjoyed a warm sunny day playing petanque (French bolws) at Porchester Community Association, near Fareham. We were ably assisted by Pat Rodgers from Porchester petanque club and greatly enjoyed the competition. Adrian and Tina

representing Didcot 18 plus won the overall competition. Our thanks once again to PCA and the Porchester Petanque Club.

Rounders



21st September saw South Bucks Plus hosting the area rounders competition in Marlow. The event started with a picnic at noon before getting down to the serious competition at 1pm. A coalition team formed from South Bucks, Slough and Oxford came out the eventual winners.

Reading Treasure Hunt



Reading 18 plus hosted an evening walking treasure hunt on the 18 October. There was by all reports an extremely good buffet to fortify the members before the off. The teams then set off around the town answering questions and gathering mementoes of their trip. Spot the 18 plus members in the attached photo.

Your Area Committee



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*Vacancies exist for Activities and Assistant posts, please speak to
any committee member if you feel you can help*

A short elevator ride later the group's next stop proved nostalgic as we viewed an exhibition paying tribute to a famous comedian within the annuals of Blackpool's history. The comedian was not well known to us but it was the rare sight to see a working home theatre set up from past days. This captivated some group members for a brief period then it was time to head for the circus attraction.

This entertained for the most part: particularly the second half, which included an act carried out by performers from China using hoops to perform spectacular acrobatics inside the circus ring. Dinner was given an interesting twist when the pizza was dropped. However the tin of corned beef remained behind closed doors inside the cupboard. Most of the pizza other the other hand ended up in the bin as from its taste it was clear wasn't quite right despite our chief's efforts to re-cook it. Fed and refreshed, it was time for another night on the town with the emphasis on finding a good nightclub. Shortly we met a female giving out promotion leaflets; that she was a fellow Scott was particularly pleasing to one member of group. Walking seemed the best way to meeting females in town, especially females that were on their hen night as remarked later. It was still too early though for a nightclub so we decided to try 'The Tower Venue' first. Several drinks followed and everyone chilled out to music ranging from Madness 'Our house' to Justin Timberlake's 'Rock your body'. On to a nightclub, using our discount leaflets, the next destination was the 'Palace'; this proved to be a bit of an acquired taste which proved to be to its disadvantage everyone deciding to go after just one round.

On Sunday the group decided to do something a bit more energetic; first a trip aboard a tram for the short journey to the 'Sandcastle' leisure complex and a spot of swimming. Crazy golf was next proving just how tough doing something as simple as putting a golf ball in a hole can be. After a quick stop to buy holiday hats (even though not everyone got into spirit of it!), it was on to the 'Pleasure Beach' proving very welcome to everyone in the group. After lunch/refreshment some of the group braved the attractions. The roller coaster ride 'the avalanche' proved to be good while it lasted but was too short lived for the price. However 'the Dodgems' was excellent fun and enjoyed by everyone. Previously the majority of the group had enjoyed the 'Log Flume' and some karting. After the pleasure beach and a lot of walking some member of the group took an opportunity to visit an adult's only venue. Back at the accommodation dinner proved not to need the tin of corned beef, a point not particularly appreciated by one of the group. Later it was time for a final night on the town and everyone was determined this would be a really good night. The venue decision was Flares nightclub and then it was time to hit the town. The nightclub was quiet on arrival but soon started to pick up. After a few drinks and plenty of dancing it was time to head back

The next day's journey back to Southampton went by quickly and yes the tin of corned beef did make the journey back as well. All in all it was a good weekend and do believe enjoyed by everyone that went.

Bletchley Park

Didcot group had often talked about arranging a trip to Bletchley Park, the home of the war time code breaking effort, on the 17th August we finally made it. Looking at the web site I thought the facilities on the campus would be impressive, often in such circumstances you will be disappointed but not in this case.



We started out by taking the guided tour; this started with a brief lecture about the wartime activities at the site before leading us off around many of the buildings giving us a quick taster of many of the exhibitions. The tour ended just by the close up model of the submarine from the movie. We then headed back to the main restaurant, where lunch was interrupted by a spontaneous unannounced flypast from a couple of aircraft, apparently quite a frequent occurrence. After lunch we visited the toy museum, the model railway exhibit, the Enigma machine exhibit, the radio room exhibit, and on to where many members felt like big kids again to the computer museum.



They had an amazing range of

older computers all kept in amazing working order, many of them even connected to the internet and Tina even managed to get on to the 18 plus web site. Then the air raid sirens went off to



herald the

Battle of Britain memorial flight fly past. Some of the members had a very quick look round the motor transport exhibit before it was time to leave. We never even managed to the the Churchill exhibit or even have a good look round the German radio re-enactment camp that was on site that day. An amazing day out with things to interest just about everybody, we will definitely have to return!



Aunt Sally Competition



The now annual area Aunt Sally competition was held this year on the 9th of August. It was hosted by Abingdon group and held at their venue, the Flowing Well in Sunningwell. The game consists of throwing sticks over a distance of about 30 feet to knock the dolly, a small wooden skittle, off of a metal post. The game is one of great skill, and often even more luck, with scores not usually higher than one or two out of six.

The fine weather attracted a good crowd, many of whom had a quick meal before the start. With everyone gathered the organisers arranged a total of 9 teams and the game soon got underway. We managed to avoid throwing any sticks actually at the crowd this year, although a few fence panels did suffer attack from wayward sticks, and



a lamp no longer works in quite the same way as before. We had a new first this year however when Matt managed to break one of the sticks in two, no mean feat considering they are two inch thick hardwood. The end result of the game was a victory for Thatcham group, and bottles of wine were duly dished out to the victors.

After the game everyone was invited around to one of the Abingdon members houses where a barbecue quickly got into full swing. A quick bit of work with the digital camera and photographs of the afternoons entertainment were circulated for all to enjoy.

