

The Diary of an EMA Visit to Blackpool April 2017 – by Duncan Nield

Thursday 27th April

The clans gathered in the reception of the Hilton Hotel about a mile north of the Tower on the promenade. Around 80 in number all were welcomed by our hosts Jack and Ann Baxter whose amazing organisation skills and eye for detail we were about to experience.

First up everyone received their welcome packs complete with a red Lancashire rose for the ladies and tickets to get to the top of Blackpool Tower.



After refreshments and hellos all round all found their rooms to settle in and in the blink of an eye all the men were gathered again duly suited and booted, ready for the short walk to the Savoy Hotel for our lodge meeting with Biscopham No 7646 and their WM Bro Ian Tyrell.

The hotel had been converted for our purposes with a dining room becoming the lodge room, adjacent robing room and a further dining room laid out formally for our festive board.

We then witnessed an excellent initiation ceremony complete with the most theatrical and word perfect charge all had ever seen and a seldom seen formal presentation of the white gloves.

At the festive board we enjoyed braising steak and profiteroles and worked this off by assisting W Bro Bob Cooper who bravely sang the song to the initiate in at least 3 keys and conducted, complete with formal explanation, a traditional masonic chain.

Some of us were then inducted into the art of the West Haughton Raffle, a curious but highly effective alternative method avoiding the need for raffle tickets. It should be tried with some caution as care must be taken to ensure the right brother writes down the right number. It raised £300. Here is the process:

- A number caller (NC) is chosen
- Starting from number 1, the NC allocates a number to a brother who has raised his hand to buy a number. One number costs a pledged £1. The NC points to a raised hand and says the next number in sequence which the brother writes down.
- Some brothers raise their hands and shown a number of fingers from 1 to 10, this the NC translates into them being given the next set of numbers. Eg if the next number is 17 and the brother has 5 fingers raised the NC points five times to the brother and says 18,19,20,21,22
- This continues and when things begin to slow the WM raises his hand. The NC gives him the next number and then says 'Brethren we cannot allow the WM to have the last say', which prompts another flurry of raised hands.
- When quiet the WM then raises his had again and is allocated the next number This time the NC says 'I cannot allow the WM to have the last number, so I will give £X to the brother who does buy the last number' (Depending on the numbers present this might be £5 or as much as £20). This causes more flurries f raised hands and the WM tempts them further until eventually he gives in and another brother gets the last number.
- A random number generator (easily available on the internet) is used to determine the winning numbers and the prizes distributed.

- The pledges are gathered in by passing a pot around the room and the amount raised cross checked to be the same as the last number given.
- The brother with the last number is offered his prize of £X, which he is entitled to, but most leave it in the pot for charity.



Meanwhile the ladies had been entertained to a traditional tram ride on a old style tram complete with abundant supplies of prosecco and capped all round and the bizarre efforts of Nicky Flash ‘the new Tommy Cooper’. Every trick this magician tried failed repeatedly including burning his mouth when trying to eat fire and getting stuck in the duvet ad losing his trousers when trying his bit as Houdini. The ladies had never laughed so much. What was not 100% clear was where the ‘magician’ was brilliant or incompetent. Apparently he did not get very far on Britain’s Got Talent so perhaps that is a clue.

Friday 28th April

Rising early and after a good breakfast everyone climbed onto the two coaches for our trip to the Lake District.

First stop was the Haverthwaite Railway near Newby Bridge where we boarded the steam train to The Lakeside Hotel. There we alighted the train and boarded our chartered boat for the trip down Windermere to Bowness. En route we admired the scenery and were overfed royally with a fabulous Lancashire Hot Pot (made, Ian Benton later suggested, with stolen Yorkshire lamb!) and a choice of



three sweets – chocolate profiteroles, lemon meringue pie and strawberries and cream.

To finish the day off on our return to the hotel it was time to dine ‘Blackpool Style’ with fish and chips and an unusual ice cream creation, oh yes and lashings of free wine, a side order of Kendals Mint Cake and a shot of gin or whisky!



The Brothers of Swing then serenaded the ladies by name at their tables and even included one or two willing men (Brother Parkhill) and we all had the opportunity to blow our \$20 bills featuring the head of Jack Baxter on the Blackjack and Roulette tables.



Saturday 29th April

After breakfast the AGM, (minuted formally and separately for the members present) gave rise to the election of a new executive team. Speaker John Sharratt succeeds Ian Benton, Treasurer Les Diosi succeeds David Parkhill and Secretary Duncan Nield swapped places with Ken Edwards who became Assistant Secretary.

We all then had time to ourselves and a small gang of brothers jumped on a tram to Fleetwood summonsed by our ladies who had gathered there whilst we were meeting.

We were ribbed by the conductor who was somewhat surprised by our raucous behaviour mainly attributed to John Sharratt telling a joke about sucking a Fisherman's Friend which caused Duncan to roll on the floor laughing inducing further giggles and guffaws all round.

Once reunited with our ladies we poured into a delightful Fleetwood greasy spoon called, cryptically, 'The Fleetwood Café' and tucked into yet more fish and chips.

To work them off Duncan and Maria then ventured back to the Tower and after a drenching in the 4D Experience Maria blew away one of her demons by sitting on the glass floor at the top of the tower.

Along with the brethren and ladies of Biscopham Lodge all came together from 18.15 for a champagne reception and a fabulous black tie gala dinner.



New Speaker John Sharratt paid tribute to outgoing Speaker Benton and Treasurer Parkhill and presented them and their ladies with gifts of thanks. He then formally acknowledged the amazing deal and organisation achieved for us all by organiser Ann, and her assistant Jack, and presented them with our gifts of thanks.



After a fabulous four course dinner with yet more free wine we then danced off the calories to the amazing 50s and 60 repertoire of the The Rockits.

Sunday 30th April

After a final breakfast another fine EMA event came to an end. Next stop Antwerp , Oct 2017. Onward!

(Author and editor - Duncan Nield, Assistant Secretary, 1ST May 2017 duncannield@talktalk.net)