

Thursday 19 April

After much preparation (which began as far back as June 2016!) it was time! Maria and I set up camp in the reception of the Imperial Hotel at midday as planned, in unplanned but welcome glorious sunshine, but were surprised to find quite a number already checked in and chatting away.

As we handed out everyone's information packs a rather odd looking woman idled up to the table, saw our EMA display stand and announced with a dismissive wave of her hand 'Pah, masons, why don't you let ladies join? And what you did to my brother in your gruesome rituals scarred him for life!'. 'Thank you for your interest' replied Maria calmly 'but we are not here for this so please go away'. She did and returned shortly thereafter with hand held out in apology muttering 'I am not a horrible person really'. UGLE's new PR campaign has obviously not quite reached everyone yet!

By 15.00 everyone was checked in and this was our full line up:

Howard & Janet	Barron
Barney	Bassett
Jack & Ann	Baxter
Ian & Barbara	Benton
Jim & Judy	Birkin
David & Carole	Collings
Bob & Eve	Cooper
Arthur	Corbett
Les & Marilyn	Diosi
Ken & Stella	Edwards
Herbie & Sadie	Guthrie
Dave & Liz	Hair
Billy & Barbara	Hanna
Pete & Wendy	Hylton
George & Mary	Kloosman
Neil & Kate	Latham
Maurice	Lynch
Colin & Marian	Newton
Duncan & Maria	Nield
David & Dora	Parkhill
Mark & Kath	Roberts
Tom & Maureen	Samwell
John and Pam	Sharratt
John and Jane	Stanyard
David & Barbara	Tabner
John	Thomson
Ian & Gill	Turner
Jarl & Ellen	Van Santen
John & Sue	Vater
James & Sheila	Wheeler

Late apologies and cancellations had been received from Albert (and Wendy) Perry and Alan Frankland. We wish them speedy returns to full health.

At 16.15 the brethren were gathered suitably attired and were led off for a short walk down the promenade to lodge. The weather was breathtakingly good and would remain so for the duration.

First stop was the Conservative Club (a.k.a. 'The Wheeltappers and Shunters') for a 'Nip and Nibbles' before stepping next door to the home of Pilgrim Lodge 6958 (and other lodges of Llandudno).

A full lodge room of some 80 brethren witnessed a 3rd degree complete with the longest pause for a correct prompt that I have ever experienced (about 20 seconds but felt like 20 minutes as I was in the chair at the time!). The phrase 'impart the afflicting intelligence' has never before and will never again be forgotten!

It was then off around the corner onto the promenade to the Bay Tree Hotel for the Festive Board. A rather raucous event complete with 4 course dinner, ample imbibing and an auction of a masonic chocolate sculpture, a family of Nat West Piggies and seemingly never ending list of raffle prizes.

The usual diehards reconvened back at the Imperial with their ladies, who had been well entertained at the Y Review raised glass fronted Theatre Restaurant overlooking the sun drenched bay. 33 ladies dined, 8 ladies from Pilgrim amongst them.

Friday 20th April

We had a slightly delayed departure on our fully laden Alpine coach when one of our ladies was not to be found. She eventually appeared shaking her head apologising profusely that she had been unable to find her cardigan – which, unbeknown to her, husband Herbie had already thoughtfully brought onto the coach earlier!

I then realised the coach was short of a microphone so my carefully planned and scripted 'guide to Conwy' had to be shelved as you have to, sensible to be fair, sit down and wear a seat belt in transit these days. The written itinerary would have to suffice. With hindsight it would appear that it did as the 'pick and mix' day to suit all tastes was well received.

All alighted in Conwy at the castle entrance and dispersed to their various chosen delights severally from Conwy Castle itself (dating from the early 14th century built by Edward 'Longshanks'), Aberconwy House (a medieval town house), Plas Mawr (an Elizabethan town house), the Conwy Marina Walk, the Conwy Town Walls Walk, the unusual shops, or simply a Liverpool Arms pint on the quay!

The day was split in half beautifully by The Castle Hotel who served us well with a fine 3 course lunch to everyone's individual choice and tastes. The Eton Mess was particularly amazing.

Back at base camp by around 17.30 people meditated their evening ahead. About half our number chose to dine at The Blue Elephant indian (Bangladeshi actually) restaurant and experience fine food and their unique chaotic idea of attentive service. Others relaxed in the hotel or ventured into town to try one of the various recommendations received.

Saturday 21st April

Another beautiful morning and the brethren gathered for the AGM in the Promenade room, joined by David Hair, John Stanyard and Harry Forrester. A lengthy and lively meeting ensued whilst the ladies soaked up the sun on the prom.

The afternoon was spent variously walking the prom and pier, taking the funicular railway or the cable car to the summit of the Great Orme, refreshments at the Dry Ski Lodge or a 5 mile walk around Marine Drive and West Shore beach taking in the Rest And Be Thankful tea room.

At 18.15 90 formally dressed brethren & ladies from EMA, Pilgrim lodge and other Llandudno lodges gathered for prosecco before being summoned to the ballroom for our traditional Gala dinner.

A Welsh themed meal was served – a terrine of welsh cheese, leek and potato soup, welsh lamb, bara brith bread and butter pudding, and finished off with coffee and welsh hand made chocolates. A lucky person at each table also was presented with the table centrepiece – either a masonic chocolate sculpture, or a ‘chocolate box of chocolates’ – after a free prize draw led by a nominated draw master. (One table asked the waiter to take their centrepiece away to be cut into 9 pieces as they thought it was a cake! – it was actually a box made of chocolate containing 18 hand made chocolates).

The headline entertainment was Cantorion Gogledd Cymru (‘The North Wales Choir’), a 30 piece gathering of fine male voices. Three of the brethren are friends of mine and members of my mother lodge Vardre 8949. I had not appreciated until this night just how good they are. They fully deserve their position as the choir of choice for the Wales rugby team at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff. The room was captivated by their presence and the sound invoked many tears of joy and emotion to such an extent that even I struggled to choke back the tears and thank them at the end.

Their finale was of course Land Of My Fathers and everyone stood and sang along armed with a songsheet showing the Welsh, phonetic and English translation.

Sunday 22nd April

After a final breakfast the hotel lobby was crowded and noisy with people’s memories of a happy time together. After final fond farewells and all looked forward to gathering again in Bratislava in October.

Duncan Nield, EMA Secretary and on this occasion the event organiser.