

A Fantastic Weekend In Cambridge Organized by Our President Terence De Souza and Wife Anna



Forty two Croydon brothers and wives enjoyed a superbly organized weekend from 25th to 27th August in Cambridge . As we all checked into the well-appointed and comfortable Hotel Gonville we were welcomed by our President Terence and his charming wife Anna and we could immediately tell that we were in for a truly wonderful couple of days.

The Friday afternoon is always an especially exciting time as when everybody arrives after their journeys from home (some by car and some by train). It is then that we can begin the process of letting our hair down and socializing with our friends. The Friday afternoon in Cambridge was no exception and most of us gathered outside in the hotel bar area to enjoy teas or something a little stronger. After an interlude to freshen ourselves up we were invited to meet to hear a useful and detailed briefing on the weekend from President Terence. Later we walked the short distance through the historic centre of Cambridge to the Eagle Public House where our tables and menu selections had been pre booked. This was an inspired choice of evening meal venue as the place simply exudes a historic atmosphere and the following day we learned just how much of a central part it has played through the years. A favoured haunt of RAF air crew during WW2 to the place where the discovery of the DNA helix was announced to the world by an excited Crick and Watson.



On the Saturday morning a small contingent from our group took part in the Cambridge Park Fun Run. All returned looking fit and healthy. For those of us who were nursing sore heads after the previous evening's excesses we felt that maybe we should also be doing something to get fitter but maybe not just yet. The remainder of our weekend was calling and it was time for a delicious breakfast. In addition to a cooked breakfast there was a large selection from the buffet bar. It was the first time that some of us



had seen an unmanned pancake making machine and it worked very well producing tasty tiny little pancakes.

A beautiful classic chauffer driven Bentley was made available on a complimentary basis for those who wished to take advantage of an opportunity to be taken for a drive out into the countryside. Quite a few of us went and came back with stories of the sites and points of interest we had seen on our luxurious tour.



In the meantime those who had booked a walking tour gathered at 10 am and as we were a large contingent we were split into two groups each with our own guide. Both guides had wonderful entertaining personalities and we were treated to an enormous wealth of interesting facts and anecdotes as we paraded through college yards, quadrangles, gardens and chapels that were freely open to the public.

Some people spent the afternoon doing retail therapy while others went on a guided tour of the stunning impressive Kings College Chapel followed by the obligatory punting on the river.



On Saturday evening we all met in the Atrium for very civilized pre dinner drinks, hosted by Terence and Anna. As with all of our time in the Hotel Gonville, the staff were extremely attentive and moved quietly amongst us, dispensing top ups with ready smiles.

The Saturday evening meal was spent in convivial company and the sound of happy chatter and sometimes even laughter around

the room evidenced that all of us were greatly enjoying each other's company. Terence delivered an entertaining well-crafted after dinner speech, which everyone enjoyed. For some the exertions of the days' activities began to tell and having had an elegant sufficiency of food and drink they retired to their rooms. Others stayed down in the bar area and whiled away another couple of hours of talking.



On Sunday morning following another delicious breakfast in the Atrium we attended the 11am Mass at the Church of our Lady and English Martyrs, which was a very short walk from the hotel. A number of us noticed the beautiful stained glass windows which depicted many of the local colleges and also scenes from the lives of many English martyrs, one of which was notably St John Fisher who is well revered by many of us because we have a boys school named after him in Purley.



One highlight of the Mass was the baptism of two young children witnessed by a church full of parishioners and visitors who were privileged to be there to welcome two new members into the community of the church.

So often when staying in a hotel for a weekend it is necessary to vacate ones room and also the car park by 11am but as a result of great planning Terence had negotiated a checkout time of 1pm for those who wished to take their time in heading for home.

This was possibly one of the most enjoyable weekends that most of us had experienced in quite a long time and it was mainly due to the fine choice of hotel and attention to detail that our brother President together with his lovely wife organized for us.

Noel Brownsell