

Wiveliscombe Civic Society visits Hinkley B

THANKS to the influence that Peter Welsh was able to exert, we were extremely privileged to have a special escorted tour of Hinkley B (an opportunity that is no longer extended to members of the general public) on the 19th January.

Peter is a Wiveliscombe resident and until recent years was manager of Hinkley Point.

Our tour commenced at 1.30 pm and after a brief introductory talk we were issued with our personal sets of interactive security passes, helmets, overalls, steel-capped shoes, safety glasses and gloves. This explained clearly to the group why their shoe sizes had been requested ahead of time!

Passing through a variety of security procedures, we reached the turbine hall, where ear-plugs were inserted and we were conducted past the enormous (and noisy) turbines, condensers and generators.

It is interesting to note that at the time of our visit 6.34 megawatts were being pumped into the National Grid.

We were able to resume normal conversation once we were on our way to view the control room where the operation of the whole site is monitored and managed.

The tour then continued up to a viewing area of the charge room, where we were able to look down on to the reactors themselves.

The operation of the site was clearly explained and our questions were



patiently answered at each stage. We now all understand a little more of the operation of an advanced gas reactor and of the in-built checks and balances that are so necessary to operate it safely - thank you to Pauline Homeshaw for organising the after-

noon. This was a thought-provoking tour, especially in the current climate where our nation's energy policies are again under review.

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that it takes some 10 years to build

such a power station, so if we opted to expand our nuclear power capability now, we would see no benefit for a long time, meanwhile our present stations would be reaching the end of their operative lives.

Peter Sharman

SCOUTING NEWS

Looking for memories

THIS year celebrates two anniversaries in the Scouting movement. The Beavers were officially recognised twenty years ago and the Cubs have been in existence for ninety years.

Next year sees the centenary of the Scouts - that is going to be a very busy year. There will be opportunities for people who have been in the movement even when they were a young member to join in - don't worry, the Messenger will keep you up to date with the information, when all the details are known.

Meanwhile, both the Beavers and the Cubs will be having special events and will be wearing anniversary badges.

If anyone has any Scouting memorabilia, can you

please share it with us? It would be good if you can share your old photographs, press cuttings etc (in this time of modern technology we can soon take copies so that you can keep your originals). Next year we are hoping to put on a public display of as much history as we can gather.

If you were a Scout, Cub or Beaver in the past and can remember some of your experiences and adventures it would be really interesting to get those onto paper - if you like we can arrange for your reminiscences to be recorded and typed up.

Were you in the movement locally before the Wivey Scout HQ was opened - where did you meet? Were you involved in building the current HQ?

Can you remember any funny times when things did not go according to plan? Do you have memories of everyday Scouting?

If the answer to any of those is yes, then please let us know and we will arrange to share those memories.

To organise something like this, the group is going to need some more help so that the Leaders can carry on with their normal duties.

Would anyone like to volunteer to help on this? If memories are recorded onto mini disc can anyone audio type? Someone needs to be able to sort the information and get it ready for display. If you think you can help us in that way, please we do need your help.

For any offers of the above please contact Pam Gaines on 01984 624657.

For Whom the Division Bell Tolls . . .

ON 18th February 2005 men and women from all walks of life hunted with hounds as law-abiding citizens. They were secure in the knowledge that they were carrying forward the tradition of centuries.

They also knew that at the stroke of midnight everything would change.

From 19th February 2005 the Mother of all Parliaments decreed that hunting with hounds was to be an illegal pastime.

The purpose of this article is not to examine whether or not this ban was an abuse of democracy (can the prejudices of a Parliamentary majority be justly imposed upon a minority of any nation?) but to assess, with the help of Alun Thomas, Master Huntsman of the Taunton Vale Harriers, how the hunt has fared in the first year of the ban.

A huntsman's greatest pride is in his hounds. Their health, welfare, and bloodlines are his abiding concerns. Alun's pack of West Country Harriers, a breed smaller in stature than foxhounds, is one of only six in the world.

The Harriers are kennelled at Huish Champflower.

Alun's great fear, when the ban came into effect, was that the hounds, whose pedigrees are long enough to make the Kennel Club blush, would all have to be destroyed.

The vital question is - has the people's support for the Hunt survived the ban? Does that support still provide sufficient income through subscriptions and donations to ensure the survival of the Taunton Vale Harriers? Yes it does . . .

Alun reports that subscriptions are up by some 25%: a sure sign that country people, by a protest vote with their cheque books, are determined not to allow their traditions, or their hounds, to be destroyed by the 'democratic' vote of those who reside in cities.

The Harrier pack goes 'hunting', in company with members on horseback, on Mondays and Thursdays, chasing down a trail laid by the huntsman.

The trail is formed, in Alun's words, by dragging 'a foul concoction' derived from the corpses of road-casualty foxes across the countryside. The scent will last for at least four hours.

It is a relief to many West Country people that the first year of the ban has passed without causing too much damage to rural life or its economy.

The jobs of the Huntsman and his assistants were not the only ones under threat. If the horse population had been seriously depleted by the strictures of the new law, other trades and businesses, such as the farrier and the feed merchant, would have been put at risk.

It is to be hoped that the old traditions will be able to survive for another year, and for many subsequent years.

In our strange world, a famous old saying has a menacing new ring to it - ' . . . never send to know for whom the Bell tolls; it tolls for thee'.

One thinks of the division bell at the House of Commons . . . it tolls, now, for the smokers, it may soon toll for the shooters and the fishers . . . and then for whom?

Simon Turnbull

Charity stamps

Thanks to everybody for keeping me supplied with all types of stamps throughout the year. St. Margaret's Hospice has benefited greatly.

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