Llandrindod Wells & District U3A Lecture Meeting November 2017

A Life Well Lived

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Berwyn Woolnough welcomed everyone especially the new members, and he commented that extra chairs were being brought into the room to cater for the large attendance. He gave news of the recent U3A Quiz, won by Welshpool, the Llandrindod teams finishing in third and fifth places. Announcements were also made regarding the film group's November and December programme, the theatre visiting group's visit to Stratford for Macbeth next June, and next month's U3A Christmas Lunch.

He then introduced the speaker Chris Hartley, whose talk was aptly titled "A Live Well Lived" which encompassed the period of his life from 1962 until his retirement in 2012.

It became clear from the outset that the speaker had experienced a very varied and interesting working life. This began when at the age of 18 he joined the Merchant Navy, including being Assistant Purser on the Queen Mary, and Deputy and Chief Purser on various ships until 1976. As well as working in Saudi Arabia and Sudan as General Manager for Institutional and Industrial catering companies, he later took over control of the Royal Hotel in Truro, Cornwall. In 1984 when Channel Island Ferries were set up Chris joined as Chief Purser on board the MV Corbiere. Then for three years he was General Manager of the St. Mellion Golf & Country Club in Cornwall. In 1991 he joined Safir International Hotel Management as Project Director for the Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Kuwait, for Arab countries, when a new conference hall was constructed. During his power point assisted lecture he showed pictures of the oil fires in the country at the time. Between 1992 and 1994 he worked as General Manager of Safir Nile Cruises journeying between Luxor and Aswan, and hotels in Egypt. At this time Chris, wife Denise and his mother in law met the famous actor Omar Sharif. In 1996 Chris could be found working on St.Lucia and Jamaica in the Caribbean, as General Manager of two of the top resorts in the world.

In 2004 he was back again in Kuwait on nearby Failaka Island as Island General Manager, working with the Kuwait Royal family. Following the Iraq's virtually destroying the island in the war, Chris spent eight years rebuilding, creating, developing and managing the Heritage Village. The island had previously been famous for Greek history and ancient buildings. By 2005 a lot of work had been done on the village and hotel projects, with completion including the swimming pool in 2006, despite the 54 degrees centigrade heat!!! Chris was greatly involved in purchasing two catamarans for his employers, whilst his wife Denise, looked after and trained horses provided by the Kuwait Royal family, stables were built for the purpose. As well as the Ikaros Hotel converted from the old police station, a swimming pool, pizza house, restaurant, conference rooms and golf course were constructed, with a bouncy castle and giant chess board also being provided. In 2012 after eight years on the island |Chris and Denise retired, and in late 2013 they opened up " Dickens" in Llandrindod Wells. He is also Festival Director of the town's Victorian Festival. In his vote of thanks for the talk U3A Chairman Berwyn Woolnough referred to the speaker's "fascinating career".