

AGSD (UK)

IMPRESSIONS OF THE 24TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Goodness me, it was the 24th annual conference... next year it will be our Silver Jubilee. I bet that our founders, Ann Phillips and Sue Del Mar did not envisage that their baby would be such a strong and healthy organisation a quarter of a century on. Hugo told us that this was the largest conference ever, attended by 140 people.

For Joyce and myself, the week-end began rather sadly. On the way to Reading, we called in on Amersham crematorium to attend the funeral of Peter Phillips, a long time member of the association and, incidentally, the son of our co-founder, Ann Phillips. Pete had suffered from Type 1 glycogen storage disease and had developed multiple liver adenomas. Tragically, his body rejected 3 successive liver transplants and he died after a long period of ill health. The funeral was attended by his many of his friends and colleagues. The association was well represented. Pete's brother delivered a very moving eulogy.

We moved on to Reading and to my great surprise, found the Novotel without difficulty. Given the problems that we had faced last year, Joyce hazarded that I probably was not developing Alzheimer's. We were given a disabled parking space below the hotel and then offered a pleasant room on the 3rd floor. I can also report with great joy that this year we were untroubled by fire alarms. The food also was good, especially the bacon butties with coffee.

As usual, the conference was international, with visitors from the US, Argentina, Denmark and the Netherlands among others.

The Pompe Workshops, organised by Allan Muir, were a treasure house of information and were very well attended. I am informed that the other workshops were also lively and enjoyable.

This year, we were treated to an extra, a conference dinner on Saturday evening in a riverside restaurant. This had been organised by the indefatigable Allan Muir, ably supported by that attractive ball of fire, the diminutive Barbara, aka Mrs Muir. I had only one slight criticism of a very enjoyable evening, the mini buses transporting us to the dinner were not disabled friendly. The step on my bus was very high and I could not get my foot onto the step. Before I could think about the problem, I was being bundled on board with the driver pulling from above and Joyce, with a fist pushing into each buttock, helping from behind. I traveled rapidly and ungracefully upwards, fortunately ending with a bum on a seat. It was a bit like a scene from a Buster Keaton movie. Once on board, I began to worry about getting out, but it proved to be no problem. With gravity on my side, I just fell into the waiting arms of Mrs T.

It was a very successful Conference, and we all owe a debt of gratitude to Sue Del Mar and Allan Muir who shouldered so much of the organisational burden. And so to 2009, our 'Silver Conference', which we hope will be in Leicester. I, for one, cannot wait.

Clive Tonks