

# The Flame



## FORTHCOMING FIREBIRDS EVENTS

**Thursday  
15<sup>th</sup> December 2022  
3.00 pm**

### **Fenwicks Christmas Tea.**

This festive outing has become an institution for the Firebirds. Fenwicks provide an excellent spread and are very good with dietary requirements.

The price is £39.00.

This is an ideal recovery stop after exhausting Christmas shopping and an opportunity to catch up with Firebirds friends.



PHOTO BY ERIKA GLOYN - WE CAME ACROSS THIS MESSAGE ON A TREE WHILST WALKING IN THE WOODS IN SUFFOLK. IF YOU ARE STUCK FOR CHRISTMAS PRESENT IDEAS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, YOU COULD DO WORSE THAN BUYING A BOOK!



FENWICKS CHRISTMAS TEA 2018

**Friday  
3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023  
12 noon**

The Firebirds AGM  
Lunch will follow the AGM.  
Cost pp £55.00

### **Venue – Cutlers' Hall**

Please do come if you can. This is your chance to influence forthcoming events and activities.

The views and opinions expressed by the authors and those providing comments are theirs alone and do not reflect the views and opinions of the Editor or the Firebirds Committee.



## MORE EVENTS NEWS

### FOR 2023

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

Zoom Tea

#### **April 2023**

Visit to the Postal Museum - experience the postal service's subterranean world beneath the streets of London.



#### **September 2023**

City Walk - the subject is City Art and involves stained glass and sculpture, visiting some of the City Churches.



Detail of Dick Whittington memorial window, St Michael Paternoster Royal, College Hill by John Hayward (1929-2007)

## DEAR FIREBIRDS,

If you watch Netflix or Prime, you will have noticed the abundance of Christmas films which started appearing in November. As we are well in December now, I feel it is all right to watch some. They are like chocolate, comfort food! Whilst I wouldn't describe The Flame as such, I hope you will enjoy reading the articles and photos in this edition. And if you are after the festive flavour, go to Georgina Hall's article on page 10.

Vicky Nugée wrote a report on the Phoenix and Firebirds visit to Tony and Liz Ward's home. Having walked with the Basketmakers' Company in the Lord Mayor's procession, Vicky is now sharing her excitement about this experience with us.

Diana Reese has written about the wonderful Thames River Cruise lunch and Sheila Higgs is remembering her fabulous trip to the Canadian Rockies earlier this year.

Photos for The Flame this month were provided by Vicky and John Nugée, Sheila Higgs, Peter Green and Georgina Hall.

As I couldn't publish all the photos which were taken during the River Cruise lunch, you can view more pictures on the Firebirds website: [www.firebirds.london](http://www.firebirds.london)

The next Flame is due in March 2023. Our newsletter is dependent on your articles. Please give it some thought; I'll let you know when I start collecting material a bit nearer the time.

With best wishes to you and your family for a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Erika Gloyn (Masons)

Editor

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Firebirds might be interested to see the documentary about the Becket Pageant on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwGuM4NNyMw>

# THE PHOENIX AND FIREBIRD VISIT TO LIZ AND TONY WARD'S HOME IN TENTERDEN

by Vicky Nugée (Weavers)

After a grey and cool start to the morning, we were delighted to find warm sunshine and blue skies greeting us as we arrived at Liz and Tony's amazing house just outside Tenterden in Kent. They had very kindly thrown their home and garden open to us and 24 Phoenix Masters and Firebirds turned up, including Paul Hoddinott arriving in great style in Miss B, a 1954 R Type Bentley.



The Pimm's flowed, as did sparkling wine from their local vineyard, Chapel Down, and Tony and Liz very generously gave us a fine lunch which we ate on their very commodious lavender-filled courtyard. This was followed by a tour of the garden, which is quite unlike Hilary Goodridge's garden which we visited last year. It's enormous!



It includes two ponds, one of which Tony dug himself and is 110m long and 5m deep. He had to dam the end and build up the hill on which it is perched in order to accommodate it – clearly a man with large ideas! I was also impressed by the fine crop maturing in the orchard, planted with apple and pear tree varieties that reflect the original period of the house.



During lockdown Tony had set himself the challenge of making some sculptures for the garden, which he then covered in gold leaf, just for a bit of bling.

The one on the right, he says, is a sun, not a coronavirus, but I'm not so sure...



We went for a delightfully shady woodland walk (on the right of the picture above) to digest our lunch.



Back to the courtyard, and after pudding Tony took us on a tour of the house. Built as a farmhouse in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, it had been hacked about and finally neglected until major restoration work in the 1990s. Although Tony and Liz bought it after the bulk of the work was done, theirs were the hands which turned it into the home it is now, a warren of rooms, quirky, steeped in history. They believe that they have exorcised the ghost from one of the upper rooms. As Tony is Past Master Painter Stainer, perhaps we

shouldn't be surprised that it is so sympathetically and beautifully decorated, complete with gilded phoenix over the front door.

Over tea, Liz told me that it remains an ongoing project with constant attention needed to keep both it and the garden in good shape, and Tony clearly has restless hands and is frequently finding new jobs and improvements to do.

It was a wonderful visit and, as ever, such a joy to spend time with our Phoenix and Firebird friends again. We are all very grateful to Tony and Liz for their exceeding generosity and hard work in entertaining us so very well for what turned out to be a long and lovely day!





## **FIREBIRDS THAMES CRUISE**

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

by Diana Reese (Bakers)

After the breathtaking pageantry and accompanying solemnity of the preceding days it was a joy to have the opportunity to meet up with so many familiar faces for a jolly day out. As usual, El had organised the day brilliantly and she even seems to have some sort of control over the weather, which was perfect for a cruise on the Thames.

A total of 50, made up of Firebirds and Phoenix Masters, were welcomed aboard the cruiser with a glass of Pimm's. Everyone had been given strict instructions regarding the departure time and with no stragglers in sight the boat left Festival Pier promptly – I don't think anyone was left behind! Once the Pimm's had been consumed and many friends greeted (it felt a bit like the first day back at school) we were invited to take our seats below for a delicious two course lunch. Whilst we enjoyed our cold buffet and accompanying wine, the boat took us gracefully upstream as far as Fulham. There were many landmarks to spot along the way, bridges to name and memories of past events. If you missed anything on the way out, there was another chance as we headed back downstream.

There was much chat and laughter and Chairman Vicky had some difficulty calling us to order, but eventually thanks were duly given and we were invited to raise our glasses to toast the King – a first for many of us. The boat continued downstream beyond Festival Pier before performing a graceful turn and docking gently back at our starting point. There was no rush to disembark and Firebirds and Phoenixes ambled off contentedly, happy to have spent a convivial day with friends.

Thank you El for enabling us all to renew our friendships and enjoy a gentle cruise on the Thames – well done.



# THE LORD MAYOR'S SHOW

by Vicky Nugée

The Lord Mayor's Show is the largest unrehearsed parade in the world and has taken place annually in London for the past 800 years to mark the beginning of the year in office for the Lord Mayor of London. I was particularly fortunate this year to have the chance to parade in The Lord Mayor's Show with some members of my company, the Basketmakers.

Gog and Magog, the two giants which were traditionally the guardians of the City of London, were created under the aegis of the first lady Prime Warden of the Basketmakers company in 2006, by voluntary time and effort of members of the Basketmakers Association. We marched with members of the Guild of Young Freemen, who take charge of the huge wicker statues during the parade, and were grateful that they did all the heavy lifting.



Here we are assembling outside the Museum of London; the Young Freemen in red and the Basketmakers in blue. Gog and Magog are looking particularly smart in new costumes made for them earlier this year.

We made our way past Guildhall and waited beside the Bank of England for the show to begin. Just as the Lord Mayor arrived at Mansion House there was a flypast of RAF helicopters. Finally, the Band of Scots Guards and Welsh Guards struck up a tune which I might have recognised were it not for the enthusiastic drummers following us. There were, of course, several military bands and representatives of many branches of the armed services; they have been present in one form or another since the beginnings of the parade, for security. Armed police provide that security nowadays. It was good to see that military cadets were also very well represented, many supported by Livery interest.

We hip-hip-hoorayed as we passed the Lord Mayor's party in the stand in front of Mansion House and proceeded down Cheapside. The vigour with which the drumsticks behind us were being plied meant that we were actually passing right under the peal of Bow Bells before I realised that they were joyfully joining in the celebration. Passing St Paul's, we went on up Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street towards The Strand. In the early days of the Mayoralty this journey was made by barge as that was the usual way to get around London. The pageantry grew up around that journey, and the river transport gave rise to the term 'float' when used in the context of parades.

At last we came to the Royal Courts of Justice, where the Lord Mayor would swear loyalty to the King. However, as we were number three in the parade, the Lord Mayor still had many more floats to watch marching past Mansion House before he could climb into his magnificent state coach and join the back of the parade.



THE NEW LORD MAYOR OF LONDON, NICHOLAS LYONS

We stopped at nearby Temple Place for a lunch break. There were black sacks of lunch bags available for the floats which were very welcome. But I should imagine that it must have been a fantastic logistical problem for the Pageantmaster to find space for all those floats to stop. I saw a parking space reserved and fenced off with hurdles containing two camels, belonging to the Merchant Taylors' float, and the Paviers' enormous inflatable pig tethered to the railings.

There are, in fact, three miles of dancers, tractors, horses, vehicles, soldiers, bands, bicycles, tanks, open fires, ancient carriages and giant pigs and penguins to be assembled early in the morning, marched to Aldwych, hidden away, lunched, reassembled in the right order, marched back to the City and eventually dispersed. It's quite amazing that the whole thing doesn't fall flat on its face. The lunch break is, of course, the time taken for the Lord Mayor to be driven to the Royal Courts of Justice, make his Oath of Loyalty, and return to Mansion House.



Everyone reassembled after lunch and we set off along Victoria Embankment and back towards Guildhall via Queen Victoria Street. The lunchtime stop at Temple Place, looking out across the Thames and HQS Wellington, had felt a little as though we were out in the wilds. However, marching back into the City, we saw again the waving crowds, the happy people, the smiling faces. It was marvellously uplifting.

# CANADIAN ROCKIES TOUR 2022

by Sheila Higgs (Launderers)

Organised by the Caravan Club UK, we met up with 13 other couples all looking for a Canadian adventure. Late May saw us depart from Heathrow airport - destination Calgary.

We started our adventure with a day exploring the city; a must is a trip up the Calgary Tower. Amazing views of the surrounding country. Because of the late spring this year, there were Tulips and Daffodils in abundance in the Calgary parks.



We travelled from Calgary to Airdrie to collect our home for the next three weeks, a 5.5 ton monster RV truck; ours was appropriately named 'Chateau'. The RV travelled 8 miles to every gallon used!

Once we mastered the 'Chateau', we travelled to Banff, and spent a day walking round the town and along the Bow River. Here you can take a ride on a rib, which is not for the faint hearted as we were in the spring thaw and rivers were full and turbulent. We took our first ride in a cable car, there were a few rides along the way. In the centre of Banff there is the train station. Canadian trains (like their neighbours in USA) are huge. It can take 20 minutes to travel past a crossing. You don't want to get stuck there if in a hurry, but

holiday makers are enthralled. Also you can just walk out of the station onto the track, which we did at every opportunity.



Our next stop was Jasper. I think the highlight of our visit was the Jasper Sky Tram which is an aerial tramway on the mountain called The Whistlers. It is the highest and longest guided aerial tramway in Canada. It goes to a height of 2,263 metres above sea level with a travel time of 7.5 minutes.

A must when in Jasper is a visit to The Athabasca Glacier which is one of the six principal 'toes' of the Columbia Icefield, located in the Canadian Rockies. The glacier currently loses depth at a rate of about 5 metres per year and has receded more than 1.5 km and lost over half of its volume in the past 125 years. Scary global warming!!



On our way to Vancouver we stopped at Clearwater, a district municipality in the North Thompson River valley in British Columbia, Canada, where the Clearwater River empties into the North Thompson River. It is located 124 km north of Kamloops. We ventured off road to an amazing waterfall (there were many on our trip), which is allegedly as tall as Niagara Falls, but much smaller. Still impressive.

Then on to Heffley Creek and the ski resort of Sun Peaks, which would be amazing in the snow, but wet and deserted in May.



As we travelled onwards the weather deteriorated and we were constantly soaking wet. The views were still amazing, with the added interest of low clouds half way up the soaring mountain ranges. The only bear we saw was in a Park in Kamloops.



We arrive in Whistler, location of the winter Olympics in 2010. Whistler is home to The Peak2Peak Gondola, connecting Whistler Mountain to Blackcomb Mountain, The Peak2 Peak Gondola is a tricable gondola lift. It is the first lift to join the two side-by-side mountains. It held the world record for the longest free span between ropeway towers, 3.03 kilometres (1.88 miles), until 2017. Whistler-Blackcomb has touted the gondola as an iconic attraction and uses it to transport skiers in the winter months as well as sightseers all the year round.

On June 8<sup>th</sup> we arrived at our camp site just outside Vancouver, at last it is warmer. After travelling in by train we spent a day sightseeing Vancouver including Gastown, where there is the famous gas powered clock and Stanley Park, great for cycling.



The weather was still warm as we headed to Penticton. Now we are on our return trip. The camp site is situated on The Okanagan Lake, we were set up right on the lakeside, but the Cottonwood trees were shedding the cottony, silky tufts of hair that are attached to the seeds and help them to disperse in early summer. These got into everything, and we were constantly sweeping them out of every corner of the RV.

We visited the Revelstoke Dam, also known as Revelstoke Canyon Dam. It is a hydroelectric dam (combined earth fill dam and gravity dam) spanning the Columbia River, 5 km (3.1 mi) north of Revelstoke, British Columbia. The powerhouse was completed in 1984 and has an installed capacity of 2480 MW.

Our visit to Radium Hot Springs was interesting; a hike along a trail gets us to the warm mineral pool. We expected something natural and rocky, but it was just like a very warm shallow swimming pool, absolutely full of people!! Maybe a little disappointing.



An enjoyable couple of hours was spent at the Golden Skybridge. We didn't brave the zip wire. The swaying suspension bridges which span a deep canyon, with sweeping mountain views, were scary enough! Notice the nervous look on Past Master Launderer when touching the sky, there was a sheer drop to the canyon below just behind him!!



We spent our final night in Kananaskis. Again it was cold and wet, but the site had covered halls where we had our group BBQ to use up all the food we had left.

On 15<sup>th</sup> June we had to return our lovely RV. We will miss it; it was great fun.



## MERRY KISSMAS

by Georgina Hall (Water Conservators)

A mistletoe bough is a traditional decoration in our hall at Christmas.

One Christmas many years ago with two small children in tow, I went to the local greengrocer for a bunch of mistletoe. Having chosen a bunch with the most berries, I playfully asked the young man serving, if the bunch came with any guarantees. To my great surprise he leant over the counter and kissed me on the cheek. Embarrassed, but charmed, I asked the young man the price of the mistletoe. "The mistletoe is free," came the reply, "...but the kiss will cost you £2.50". !!!!!

The Kissing Bough tradition dates back many centuries. The Romans associated mistletoe with peace, love and understanding and hung it over doorways to protect the household. The custom in Christian Europe was the hanging of a small tree-top, upside down, as a symbol of the Holy Trinity and with blessings towards the family. Visitors to the house would do a symbolic embrace with the master and mistress of the house under the bough as a sign of goodwill and fellowship. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century mistletoe became associated with Christmas as a decoration under which lovers were expected to kiss.

The tradition of kissing under the mistletoe was particularly popular with servants in Victorian England and they have been credited with perpetuating the tradition. The tradition dictated that a man was allowed to kiss any woman standing underneath the mistletoe and should she refuse the kiss, then bad luck would befall her.

Another tradition specified that with each kiss a berry should be plucked from the mistletoe and once the berries had all been picked the kissing must stop. I assume my young greengrocer friend did not know this version of the tradition, with one picked berry and the half a dozen berries that had fallen off by the time I reached home, there would hardly be any point of buying the bunch!

In nature mistletoe is regarded as a pest. Seeds are spread by birds that eat the flesh of the berries. It is a parasitic plant that attaches itself to a variety of trees, causing growth stunting and even killing the host tree.

In cultures ancient and modern, mistletoe is an important symbol of love, fellowship and blessings. References to these traditions feature strongly in popular culture through Christmas songs, keeping the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe alive. Remember the 1952 song *I Saw Mummy Kissing Santa Claus*? There will this year, as in the past, be a Christmas song that will extol the virtues of mistletoe traditions.

This Christmas, buy some mistletoe, make a kissing bough for the hall and spread the love.