

KierLink

The magazine for the Kier Fellowship Trust | Issue 40 | Spring/Summer 2020



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Neil Meixner

Chairman's matters and Administrator's report

Welcome to our Spring/Summer 2020 issue of the KierLink which is full of interesting articles and reports on events from around the country.

Most of you will be aware of the financial difficulties Kier Group have been going through during the last year which has resulted in a programme of cost cutting and austerity measures. This has impacted on the Fellowship by the suspension of the matched funding we used to receive from the company in previous years. It will be necessary therefore to fund events exclusively from our own income generated from our 'investments portfolio' which we are pleased to report is in excellent shape.

Whilst we hope that as many events will be arranged this year as previously it may well be that you'll be asked to pay a bit more for them.

We are encouraged by the positive response from our area organisers faced with this challenge which shows how dedicated they all are to the Fellowship. We know you, the members, will support them.

The Trustees have arranged meetings with the new 'main board' of Kier Group to explain the existence and importance of the Fellowship over the last 22 years, and to establish a path going forward in the new organisation. These meetings have produced positive feedback and a willingness to work with us.

Please remember also that we have a dedicated website which will be updated during the course of the year at: www.fellowship.kier.co.uk. The site includes a home page, membership invitation page, calendar of events, contacts page, blog, gallery of photographs from events and even all the back copies of KierLink!

Interest in the Trust remains strong with new members joining from most divisions of the company and membership is currently standing at 1,353.



Brendan O'Boyle

New members should be aware that the Kier Rewards Scheme remains available to Trust members but Kier will automatically delete their account when they leave the organisation, including the payroll number. However, please note that members can re-join the Kier Rewards Scheme by contacting their area organiser or Brendan O'Boyle with their full name, date of birth, email address and National Insurance number so that central Trust records can be updated first. The information will then be passed to the Rewards Team on the first day of each month for loading live on the system.

Please make sure that if you change your address you give your new address to your area organiser and Brendan O'Boyle so that our records can be updated – it is helpful to have any new telephone number as well – so that you can continue to receive invitations to events and copies of KierLink magazine.

If you require help or information with any matters relating to the Kier Group Fellowship Trust, please contact Brendan O'Boyle by email as shown below:

brendan.o'boyle.ext@kier.co.uk

Regards Neil & Brendan

Editor's note

Dear members... I hope you all enjoyed the festive season. Spring is now on its way and will hopefully bring calmer, brighter weather!

You have all been busy catching-up over lunches etc. And while it's nice to take a risk and try new food venues, it's good to frequent your favourites where you know you'll be well looked after and the food is edible! One of my 'faves' is Indiya in Bedford. A group of six of us have frequented this establishment many times over the years so we're recognised and have a nice rapport with all the workforce. Plus, very lucky to receive a complimentary dish or two and 'nightcap' on special occasions!

I have written about my achieved life-time ambition of swimming with dolphins at Zoomarine in Albufeira, Portugal, which I hope you enjoy.

On a thoughtful note, Vic Thompson has shared with us his work journey in Iraq in early 1980 while working with Kier International. At this time Sadaam Hussain launched his notorious invasion of nearby Iran. Vic explains the trials, tribulations and bravery of the workforce out there. Hat's off to them all!

I know with the unfortunate situation that Kier Group is in at the moment this may affect your events etc, but those events you do attend will be all the more precious I'm sure.

Best wishes, Andrea



Andrea McDaid

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COVER PHOTO: DOLPHIN EMOTIONS...
 "A SLICE OF PARADISE, INTERACTING WITH DOLPHINS PROVIDING UNIQUE EXPERIENCES THAT WILL CERTAINLY CHANGE YOUR LIFE."



Copy deadline for Autumn/Winter 2020 issue:

**MONDAY
 17 AUGUST**

Email kierlinkmag@gmail.com

Message from the Chief Executive

Hello, and welcome to the Spring edition of KierLink.

Before moving on to the year ahead, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on 2019 which was undoubtedly a challenging year for our business. You will have seen our full year results in September which included multiple moving parts, the most significant of which was the reporting of a statutory loss of £245m arising from a large number of exceptional charges totalling £341m.

These exceptionals covered a variety of costs which I felt we needed to announce in order to clean up our balance sheet and allow us to move forward with our new strategy.

The costs relate to: the exit or sale of some businesses; restructuring of the business as we reshape and rightsize the Group; and numbers related to some significant contract losses. There is no doubt that this was disappointing, but we are still a good business.

I have spent a lot of time meeting people from across the Group and it has been a genuine pleasure to hear feedback from our clients about the excellent work our employees are doing for them day in, day out.

We have had some fantastic successes over the past year, ranging from being awarded a place on 23 Lots of the £30bn Crown Commercial Services Construction Works and Associated Services framework, installing a 1,000-tonne pre-cast bridge for the Luton DART project and completing hundreds of projects for our clients and customers.

Last year we also identified that our offices in Tempsford are significantly underutilised and also costly to run and maintain and so Tempsford Hall will close by the end of June this year. The majority of employees who are currently based at Tempsford will move to other Kier offices, including Rushden and Waterbeach, over the next few months.

I know that many of you will have worked at Tempsford during your career with Kier and have fond memories of your time there, but

it's important that we deliver on our strategic priorities and provide employees with modern working spaces.

Coming into the new calendar year, we have now completed the first half of the financial year, with results to be announced in March, and we have appointed Matthew Lester as our new chairman. Since the beginning of January we've also had some good project successes including our appointment to build the new Crawley Town Hall as part of a £150m regeneration scheme and as a partner to Openreach to carry out all fibre and copper network works across Hampshire and Berkshire.

Everything we now do supports our strategic plan to simplify and focus the Group, strengthen the balance sheet and improve cash generation.

We will continue to focus on our core businesses of Construction, Highways, Utilities and Infrastructure. We will also continue our programme of transitioning some of our non-core businesses, including progressing the sale of Kier Living.

We are also introducing our new culture of Performance Excellence, an enduring way of working that will guide all of us in Kier on how to run our business effectively and will be fundamental to how we operate in the years ahead. The first outputs have included the rollout of a new Operating Framework and Code of Conduct.

There is a lot to be done, and there may be a few bumps in the road, but there are plenty of reasons to stay positive and look to the future. We have a clear plan and vision of where we want the business to be and are already making good progress.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.



Andrew Davies

A warm welcome to the following **new members**

Name	City/town	Area	Worked for	Years of service
Matthew Bower	Kings Lynn, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier Construction Eastern	15
Phillip Cadman	Godalming, Surrey	Solent	Kier Southern	4
Dulangi Devasiri	Great Cambourne, Cambs	Tempsford	Kier Group	12
Glenda Hamilton	Wighill, North Yorkshire	Leeds	Kier Northern	18
Jon Hood	Deopham Green, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier/Ayton	29
Paul Lucas	Bournemouth, Dorset	Solent	Kier Southern	17
Rose McBride	Rushden, Northants	Rushden	Kier Highways	6
David Paterson	Great Missenden, Bucks	Maple Cross	Kier Southern	46
Jerry Pullinger	Kempston, Beds	Tempsford	Kier Professional Services	26
Kay Rogan	Henlow, Beds	Tempsford	Kier Ltd	17
Brian Setchfield	Bedford, Bedfordshire	Tempsford	Kier Infrastructure	21
Philip Shaw	Brinsley, Nottingham	Central	Kier Construction Central	14
Samantha Thorpe	Wigan, Lancashire	Liverpool	Kier Highways	14

Great Canal Journey...

The Anderton Boat Lift: by John Abbott



Last July, Carol and I decided to tackle The Cheshire Ring by narrow boat. The Cheshire Ring is a circular route around the south of Manchester. The highlight of the ring is The Anderton Boat Lift.

The lift was opened in July 1875 as a commercial response to the costly problem of moving goods between the River Weaver and the Trent & Mersey canal, a level difference of 50ft. It was primarily commissioned by two industries: **1)** the potteries wanted access to the River Weaver, hence to Liverpool, for exporting their goods; **2)** the salt mines along the River Weaver wanted access to the canal system to distribute their product.

The design of the lift, by Edwin Clark, was ingenious and relied on the principles discovered by Archimedes around 250 BC. Two cast iron troughs filled with water are connected by a hydraulic system and as one goes down, the other comes up, operated by enormous rams of 3ft in diameter. The only power that was needed to operate the lift was a ten-horse power steam engine.



components rusted quickly and the seals in the rams kept failing.

A solution was proposed and implemented in 1906 by Colonel J.A. Saner to scrap the hydraulic system and convert the lift to a cable operation system of counterweights. It was at this time that all the cogs and headgear in the photographs were added. This time, power was supplied by a 30-horsepower electric motor and the conversion was carried out working 24-hours a day with two 'possession' periods: 19 days in April and ten days in August. The cost was £25,869.

Operation of the lift became far more reliable with annual tonnages of 75,000- 1,000,000 tons of goods recorded until the Second World War when traffic declined significantly. After the war, the lift became more unreliable and, following a couple of potentially serious accidents, it was taken out of service in 1983.

In 1997, following public appeals, Heritage Lottery funds and funding from British Waterways Board, the decision was taken to restore the lift to its original hydraulic operation – this time using hydraulic oil and an electric motor. Cost of the restoration was £7m and work commenced in March 2000 with the official re-opening on 26 March 2002.

The Anderton Boat Lift is the only one of its kind and is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. It is subject to The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 and is operated by the Canal and River Trust.



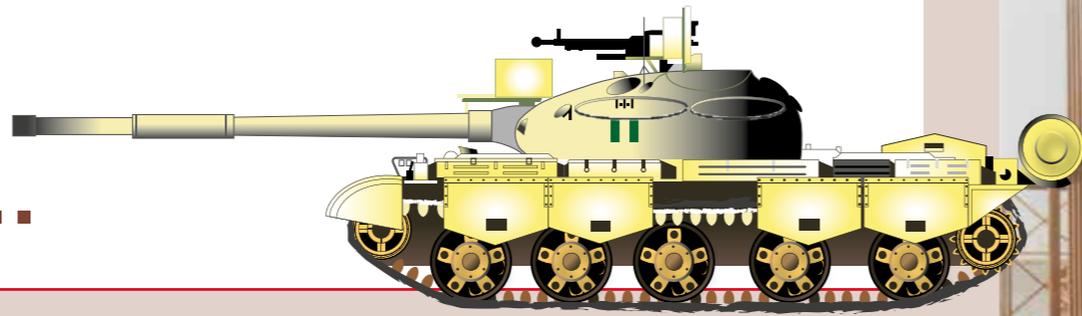
The completed lift was hailed as a great engineering triumph at the time but unfortunately it proved unreliable. The main problem was that hydraulic oil had not been discovered and so the fluid in the hydraulic system was water and, with all the salt around, the

Obituaries

Our thoughts are with the loved ones of those who have passed away.

Graham Abbey	10/01/2020	Alan Fordham	10/10/2019	Vera Powell	04/12/2019
Desmond Bacon	09/01/2020	(Dave) Arthur Gillians	10/01/2020	Alec Rhodes	27/11/2019
Olive Bailey	10/08/2019	Robert Goose	23/12/2019	Peter Richardson	01/01/2020
Constance Baldwin	04/09/2019	Margaret Gray	05/01/2020	David Roulston	09/12/2019
John Bower	22/01/2020	Grace Greenslade	14/10/2019	Leonard Shipley	31/10/2019
Eric Boyle	07/01/2020	Rita Harding	14/01/2020	Eileen Snow	17/01/2020
Robert Bresland	07/10/2019	Edmund Harwood	07/10/2019	Dora Stevens	03/11/2019
Anthony Bull	04/01/2020	Garry Honeyball	30/01/2020	Stephen Swan	20/01/2020
Christopher Burstow	25/08/2019	Rose Hotchen	23/12/2019	Eileen Sykes	28/10/2019
Frederick Burton	19/01/2020	Frederick Hutton	27/01/2020	Ronald Tough	04/09/2019
Alexandra Clark	20/10/2019	David Jillians	10/01/2020	Ann Wilcox	17/11/2019
Geoffrey Clark	04/11/2019	Joseph Lister	09/02/2020	Cyril Williams	18/11/2019
Winifred Coleman	22/08/2019	Nora Malcolm	25/11/2019	Bernard Wilson	12/09/2019
Bill Colman	03/05/2019	Reginald Melloy	06/08/2019	Michael Woodland	26/12/2019
Richard Culy	29/09/2019	Gill Murduck	09/08/2019	Pamela Worthington	09/11/2019
Brian Duff	28/08/2019	Ann Newman	03/12/2019	Alastair Young	24/10/2019
Dorothy Flood	08/02/2020	Derek Nichol	30/12/2019		
Derek Emerton	10/09/2019	Danny Normile	02/12/2019		

Wrong place, wrong time...



Early in 1980, Kier International won a contract in joint venture partnership with Kuwaiti contractor, Musaad Al Saleh, for work at Umm Qasr port in Iraq. The site was located some 60km from Basra, and work involved the installation of a substantial sheet pile wall forming the new berthing facilities for the port.



My initial task as project manager was the establishment of a camp for expat staff and labour from India & Pakistan, and the importation of plant & equipment required for the job. With some expat staff on site and the use of local labour some progress was made in establishing camp and office facilities in readiness for work to commence. However, on 22 September 1980, the Iraqi president, Sadaam Hussain, launched his notorious invasion of nearby Iran, and on that morning, Basra was inundated with Iraqi tanks trundling their way across the Shatt al-Arab into Iran. Needless to say, reprisals from Iran were swift and lethal, with Irani jets carrying out raids on Basra and surrounding oil facilities in the region. Complete chaos ensued and the border with Kuwait at

Safwan, some 20km from the site, was soon inundated with personnel fleeing from the conflict.

My immediate problem was to get my own expat staff to the border using the limited transport we had on site at that time, particularly as the border post was due to shut down by the evening. Unfortunately, with many chores and problems involved in closing down and securing the site that day, it became apparent that I myself would be unable to get to the border before it closed that evening. I was faced therefore with the unenviable prospect of a further night alone in the camp which was now heavily patrolled by the Iraqi army. Power supplies were cut off and a strict blackout regime existed while the sound of distant explosions prevailed throughout the night.

At first light the following morning I got a lift to the border and later that day was safely through into Kuwait and eventually on a flight home. However, my problems weren't over. During my first night at home I became extremely ill and a visit by my doctor in the early hours of the next morning confirmed that



I was suffering from acute appendicitis and was admitted to hospital immediately for the necessary surgery. During the next few days recovering in hospital I had time to contemplate on how dire things could have been for me had Sadaam Hussain launched his attack 24 hours later!

By December of that year, and despite the war, it was possible to obtain a visa for Iraq and so by Christmas we were back on-site making preparation for permanent work to begin. With a full labour force now on site and the importation of piling equipment, we were able to commence installation of some 5km of sheet pile wall. Progress was hampered from time to time by Irani air raids in the area and at one stage, during the notorious battle at Khorramshahr when things became particularly dangerous, we were forced to evacuate the entire



site, staff and labour force to the comparative safety of Baghdad. Eventually we were able to return to site and despite the onerous conditions imposed by the war & the aggressive climate conditions, work was eventually completed in 1983.

The war however continued until 20 August 1988 when Iran accepted the UN-brokered ceasefire. Despite six years of futile conflict, the end of the war resulted in neither reparations nor border changes.

Vic Thompson



The Shatt al-Arab on the Iran-Iraq border

Around the regions

Bristol and Newport

On 12 September we met on a dull drizzly day in the 45-acre peaceful Arnos Vale Cemetery, luckily just for a guided tour (haha). Our knowledgeable guide was Alan, optimistically and smartly dressed in a straw hat and bow tie. As we set off the drizzle stopped and the sun came out. Arnos Vale, the largest cemetery in Bristol, was a commercial enterprise opened for burials in 1839. The cheapest burial cost one guinea. Many declined the 10-shilling levy for burial in the consecrated area and opted for the cheaper non-conformist plots. Arnos Vale was also the first crematorium in the south west, commencing in 1928 – half its 300,000 burials are of cremated remains.



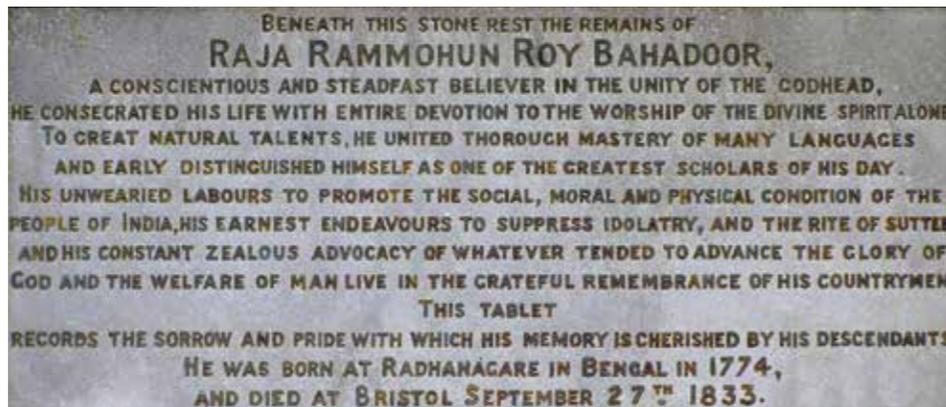
Meeting our guide at Arnos Vale Cemetery

Bristol was a leading tobacco port and the cemetery contains many well-known city entrepreneurs including William Day Wills who, with his brother Henry Overton Wills II, took over their father's tobacco business, WD & HO Wills. Both were (sensibly) non-smokers and great



Resting place of Elisha Smith Robinson

benefactors of Bristol University. We saw the grave of printer Elisha Smith Robinson, the anti-slavery movement secretary, George Culley Ashmead, orphanage founder George Muller who eventually had 20,000 children in his care, and the headstone of the aptly named Thomas Stiff, a starch manufacturer. There is even the huge ornate final resting place of a visiting Indian spiritual leader Raja Bahadoor,



who was originally buried in the garden of the house where he died but was moved due to too many visiting pilgrims.

The cemetery, now a Charitable Trust, is rated a top Bristol visitor attraction. Apart from informative guided walks, it still holds funerals, films, dance classes and, bizarrely, has an outdoor wedding venue with some 50 weddings a year! Following our tour among the graves, we enjoyed a 'lively' lunch at the nearby Bocabar.



Resting place of Raja Bahadoor



Members at the Old Barn Inn

Our usual October meal was held at The Old Barn Inn, Llanmartin, near Newport. The venue is popular with our members with an excellent turn-out of 32 who were very well looked after by the efficient management. Following an initial catch-up in the bar, we had a very enjoyable meal in The Orangery dining area.



Members at the Old Barn Inn

In November we returned to Bristol for a guided tour of the BBC Studios, home of the BBC Wildlife Unit, and appropriately, the Antiques Roadshow. Our 20 members were divided into two groups to be guided around the maze of corridors and studios by the BBC's Pippa, Gethin, Bella and Julia. After an introductory film, a brief history of BBC Bristol and a tour of some of the main studios, details of adding sound and the cueing systems were explained. Following this we had a chance to put



BBC tour

some of it into practice with our own Alan Sweetland and Alison Greenslade giving very creditable 'weather forecasts' and a recording of a short spooky story, complete with creaking gate hinge sound effects!

BBC tour



BBC tour



Eighteen members then attended a lunch at the nearby Browns' restaurant.

Our thanks to Alan Jones for making the arrangements for both Arnos Vale and for the BBC.

David Priddis

Central

It's been a busy autumn for our group with several well supported outings as follows:

Cirencester: 17/09/19

Twenty-six members met in Cirencester for a guided tour of the town, given by our own Tony Large who lives there. We enjoyed a lovely sunny day and wandered the streets visiting and noting many interesting features of this old Roman town. After our tour we enjoyed an excellent lunch at a local hotel. Our thanks to Tony as he obviously put a lot of time into researching all sorts of interesting facts and stories.



Cirencester guided tour

Gloucester: 07/11/19

Twenty-four members met for an excellent guided tour of Gloucester Cathedral. With origins as a place of worship from around 679AD, construction of the current building began as an Abbey in 1089. It is the venue of England's only coronation outside Westminster since 1066 – Henry III being crowned there in 1219 aged just nine. It's royal links probably saved it from destruction by Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s, and it's spectacular interiors have recently been used for filming three of the Harry Potter films. A soup and sandwich lunch were enjoyed afterwards.

Cheltenham: 11/12/19

We returned to Lilleybrook Golf Club for our annual Christmas lunch. This is our most popular event of the year with a chance to see many old friends. The lunch was thoroughly enjoyed by all, so much so that it was agreed to immediately reserve the same venue for next year!

Twynning: 20/01/20

Every year we meet in January at The Fleet Inn, in Twynning beside the River Avon. Attended by 25-30 members, it's an informal get together when we chat over our suggestions for the coming year's outings.

Sheila Heath

Leeds

We have had two lunches at the Milford Hotel. The first was held in September and was attended by 15. The second was our Christmas lunch and attended by 39.

Kath Leadley

Christmas lunch at the Milford Hotel



Loughton and Witham

Lunch at Blakes Golf Club: 16/09/19



This year we had the hog roast at Blakes Golf Club, North Weald, which consisted of pork and chicken with all the usual accompaniments. Forty-eight members attended and enjoyed the food and location – plus a few drinks – had a good chat and reminisced over old stories.

The golf club is superbly situated for excellent views of the Essex countryside all around. We were blessed with a beautiful warm sunny day which added to our enjoyment of the occasion.

John Spray

Thursford Christmas Spectacular (TCS): 20/11/19

Thirty-five members once again made their bi-annual trip, leaving early from Chigwell Met Police Sports Grounds for Norfolk to see the TCS.

We experienced a pleasant journey up in dry autumn weather, enjoying the countryside as we passed through. We stopped off at Swaffham, a nearby market town, for lunch before continuing on to Thursford.

This year the show was celebrating 42 years of performances for the lead up to Christmas. The show's first performance was in 1977, produced by its founder John Cushing who is still

very much involved with its production and also now his two sons.

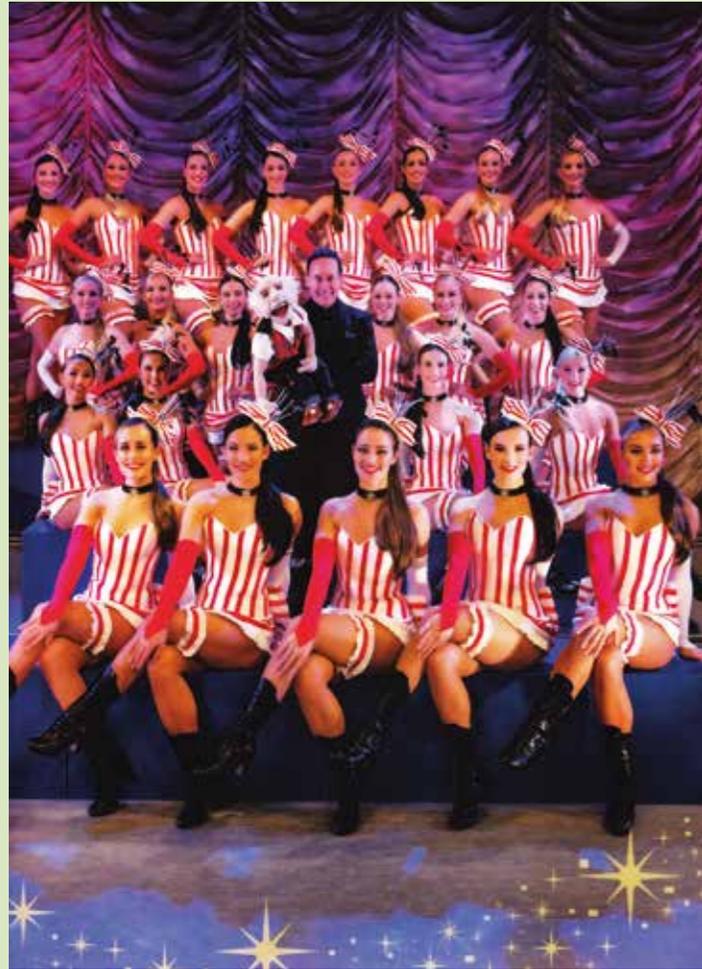
The audiences come from every county in the country – some coming year after year.

With more than 65 musical pieces and talents of a cast of over 120 the show is an extravaganza of non-stop singing, dancing, music, humour, variety and trapeze artistry.

In 1977 the venue was all old farm buildings but has been built up over the years and is now a huge shed-type building in the middle of the tiny village of Thursford.

Inside it's warm, cosy and decorated to portray the Christmas spirit. It includes a 19th century gold painted and glistening carousel around which horses prance (incorporated into the show), twinkling lights and fake snow everywhere, decorated Christmas trees, sparkly icicles line a 130ft wide stage and a mighty Wurlitzer – played throughout the show. The finale includes a flyover of white doves across the auditorium.





The show now has a production budget of £2m, runs for seven weeks and attracts 50 coach-loads of visitors per day. Since its inception it has been seen by more than 5.2 million people.

On leaving, the route to the coach park is also amazing. Across the complex are 6,434,937 lamps/fairy lights etc, hanging from trees, bushes, buildings and self-supporting figures. The sight is incredible and leaves you with an everlasting memory of your visit.

The three-hour show was enjoyed by all members who attended and on our long trip home to Chigwell everyone



was reflecting on the show and the whole day's outing in general. The overall comment was: "Can we go again in the years ahead?"

Our coach driver for the trip was excellent and looked after us exceedingly well. Thanks to him, and two of our members, we avoided a long delay on our return due to a serious accident on the M11. We took an alternative route back and arrived back at Chigwell about 7.45pm. Despite a long day everyone said it was worth the experience.

Chris Oats



Christmas lunch: 05/12/19

Sixty-three members and guests assembled at The Little Channels Golf Club for our Christmas lunch. Guests were welcomed with a drink and after the opportunity to catch up with friends & former colleagues, sat down to a splendid three-course lunch served with wine or fruit punch. After lunch, and a few words of welcome and thanks from John Abbott, the Fellowship Trust Chairman, Neil Meixner, spoke.

Neil gave an overview of the Trust nationally and its current relationship with the Group. Neil also spoke of his meetings with the new management team at Kier and, while things were financially difficult, confirmed their continuing support for the Trust. John then thanked Neil for his update and proceeded to draw the raffle. A good time was had by all and it was a very pleasant end to the year.

John Abbott



Maidstone

On 11 July we held another successful BBQ at Hadlow Manor which was very well attended. Upon arrival everyone was offered Pimms and drinks at the bar. The weather on the day was sunny so we all sat outside to enjoy our meal.

On 6/7 December 2019, 37 members and guests took up the invitation to visit the Thursford Christmas Spectacular – described as 'The biggest Christmas Show in the UK'. We stayed at the excellent Knights Hill Hotel, Kings Lynn, only 35 minutes away from Thursford. I think that everyone should give the Christmas Spectacular a visit at least once! This was my first overnight trip which was very successful and everyone enjoyed it.

On our return journey we stopped at Newmarket which didn't have any Christmas stalls which was disappointing.



On 20 December we held our Christmas lunch at Hadlow Manor Hotel which we have used for several years now. This hotel has easy access facilities for our members although unfortunately several were unable to attend this year through illness.

I am now looking to organise trip(s) for 2020.

Anne Ransley

Maple Cross

Late Summer lunch

The sun was shining, the air was very warm, and God was in his Heaven that day in St. Albans when eleven members joined together and dined at St. Villa.



The venue, found by our leader Norman, turned out to be quite a pleasant and avant-garde new experience. Plus, a watering hole worthy of being added to the Fellowship list of venues. Those of a critical disposition may say that the interior décor was slightly on the side of 'bijou' but was smart and tastefully decked out in white.



Ordering from a pre-selected menu, the food presented was acclaimed by everyone as 'delicious bordering on fabulous' for a group outing.

The young staff who served at tables were extremely friendly and courteous, attending to everyone's wishes and 'on-the-ball' with the wine! How they would cope with a much larger party will need to be tested, as it turned out that apart from two other tables we had the restaurant to ourselves!

Another plus for St. Villa was the nearby multi-storey car park in the Maltings. The ample parking bays were set out in a manner best suited for those driving a 1938 Morris Minor. Modern day tanks driven by the more affluent members of the Fellowship found that, despite using outstanding manoeuvring and parking skills, they were unable to exit their vehicles once parked. Added to which, the locating of a parking payment machine added a further dimension to the day.

Christmas lunch

On a rainy Thursday in December, 40 members gathered for the Christmas lunch at Shendish Manor which has become a regular venue.

As another group was also having a meal there at the same time, Norman issued tokens for the free drink at the bar so he wouldn't get charged for the



It's always great to catch up with friends!

other group's drinks! As it transpired, we had pretty much taken over the bar area so there were few, if any, takers from the other group. Still, better safe than sorry!

Despite a reduction in Fellowship funding for next year, and a small reduction in events, you might like to note that there are still six events planned.

Jeff Taylor

Rushden

As usual the Rushden area has kept reasonably busy with several events. Early September a small party of 11 travelled at short notice to Potters Leisure Resort for an entertaining weekend with Jasper Carrott and Alistair McGowan – not everybody's cup of tea but with plenty of inclusive wine it went down well!

Mid October took us on a weekend break to Winchester, The New Forest and Portsmouth (see *separate report*).

November saw our annual return visit to Potters for their Christmas Extravaganza weekend – always popular with good entertainment and fellowship.

Our annual Christmas lunch was held on Thursday 28 November at our local golf club – attended by 73 members and guests including five past directors with their wives. Good fellowship to be continued for years to come.

On Sunday 8 December, a full coach of 53 travelled to London for our annual visit to the Guards Chapel carol service which was supported by the Band of the Household Cavalry. This is always well supported and the start of Christmas for us.

Our New Year break this year took us to Southport – a group of 38 participated (see *separate report*).

For the coming year we have the following organised:

- Saturday 07/03/20: Royal Albert Hall – The Mountbatten Festival of Music
- Sunday 29/03/20: Ascot Races – Family Fun Day
- Friday 15/05/20: five days/four nights visiting The Isle of Man – 44 members have paid deposits.

Trips are being arranged for the Whisky/Gin Distillery in the Cotswolds, The National Arboretum and Wroxham Broads to include the Bure Valley Steam Railway. Even with Kier's economic cuts we are continuing to support the 'Old Gits' who enjoy our ventures into the unknown, and we still have a membership of 158.

Brian Hill

Winchester: 04/10/19

On a shiny new coach (delivered just the day before), 36 travellers were collected from various pick-up points before heading due west to Winchester.

Arriving in the ancient city at midday, the party split to head off in different directions to take in the beautiful Winchester Cathedral (what a good name for a song!), the Great Hall with its fabled Round Table display, ancient cobbled streets and, of course, a welcoming hostelry or two.

After this stop the coach took the party on to the comfortable Norton Park Hotel, set within 54 acres of stunning parkland, where we settled in for the duration of our stay.

Saturday dawned bright but cold and we set off for the historic naval port of Portsmouth. Here the party could visit Nelson's ship HMS Victory, the Mary Rose and HMS Warrior. Some chose to take a boat trip around the harbour and others to climb the Spinnaker Tower. Of course, as we were dropped off at the Gun Wharf Quays Shopping Village, it would have been rude not to partake in a touch of retail therapy – which we did!

After a rest, some dinner and a good night's sleep – followed by a hearty breakfast – we boarded the coach to set off on a tour of the New Forest National Park with the resident ponies. We stopped off at the small picturesque town of Romsey with its surprising and impressive abbey, before going on to Lymington for the afternoon. Our journey back to the hotel included a detour to admire the cruise ship Ventura (berthed in Southampton).

The following morning, we were homeward bound. To soften the blow we were treated to a visit to the Bombay Sapphire Gin Distillery for an informative tour and tasting. After a further lunch stop in Newbury we headed home.

Many thanks to Brian and June for another great trip, and to 'Team Jim and Angie' for their intricate local knowledge that made our visit all the more interesting.

Anne Dicks

New Year at Southport

Monday 30/12/19: At 9.00am, 38 members gathered to leave for our journey by coach to our New Year destination of Southport. The coach consisted of an assortment of goodies donated by the members: Christmas cake, mince pies, chocolates, crisps and many other items. Enjoying Bucks Fizz on our journey we arrived at Trentham Gardens in Stoke-on-Trent for a lunchtime stop.

There are the gardens, but also a wonderful assortment of lovely shops – much to the enjoyment of the ladies but not so enjoyable for the men! We returned to the coach, some weighted down with many bags, and started our journey to our final destination. A pleasant evening was spent with dinner, wine and good company.

Tuesday 31/12/19: After a good breakfast the day was free to wander Southport. Many enjoyed a brisk walk along the pier (the second longest in England). We found our way to Lord Street, the main shopping area, and spent some time looking for bargains: “Not again!” said the men.”

After lunch, we returned to the hotel for some leisure time (indoor swimming pool, sauna and gym) before putting on our glad rags (formal black tie, DJ’s and dresses) for the evening festivities.



Pre-dinner drinks were served before a four-course gala dinner. We then enjoyed professional singers, dancers and disco to take us up to 12pm, when in traditional manner a piper took us into 2020. After many wishes we eventually took to our beds soon after 2.00am!

Wednesday 01/01/20: After a much-needed lie-in and Bucks Fizz brunch, our coach picked us up for our journey to Liverpool. We enjoyed many sights: the Liver Birds building, cathedral, Royal Albert Dock and, of course, The Mersey River, where we sang ‘Gerry and the Pacemakers’ hit – remembering those times with great affection. We then went on a Beatles tour with music being played and sung at each of our stops: Penny Lane, Strawberry Fields and many more.

Next we made our way to Anfield – home of Liverpool Football Club. There must have been quite a few supporters of the club as a loud cheer went up as we slowed down to view the stadium. As we travelled further down, we saw Goodison Park – home of Everton Football Club (not such a loud cheer!)

Back to the hotel for our fancy dress ‘Caribbean evening’ and Southport did not know what had hit them! There was a colourful arrangement of outfits and those with wigs were hard to recognise! A prize was given for the two best outfits which were won by Melanie Coleman and Simon Peacock. An enjoyable evening was had by all.

Thursday 02/01/20: Time to leave our hotel after breakfast and start our journey homewards. We arrived at Bakewell for a lunch stop which is a lovely place and we were sorry to leave.

Stopping next at Matlock Bath, some of us indulged in a ‘fish n chip’ supper – not fattening at all! We arrived home at 7.30pm having enjoyed a wonderful start to 2020.

Thanks for all our friendships, Brian for organising a wonderful event, and Jim, the bar man! Here’s to many more!

Sandra Hill

Solent

More than just a walk!

It was truly one of those ‘good to be alive’ September days. The views stretched from The Needles and Tennyson Down to the eastern end of the Isle of Wight’s chalk seam, Culver Cliff, and even beyond to Selsey Bill.



Just six members met at Portsmouth Harbour Station to catch the fast catamaran across the blue waters of the Solent to the end of Ryde’s pier. Waiting to take us to Shanklin was the island’s remaining regular rail service – a 1938 underground train that used to run on the Northern Line. The bone shaking 8.5mile ride would not have been out of place at Alton Towers! It was certainly one of the day’s highlights.

Beeching and Barbara Castle both had a hand in shortening this line at Shanklin. Fortunately, the abandoned track provided a gentle path as we started our walk to Wroxall. The path then steepened as we climbed up to the downs behind Ventnor – Britain’s mildest town. Boniface Down



at 650ft was our lunch stop with views over the English Channel which, in brilliant autumnal sunshine, looked quite Mediterranean. We then completed the horseshoe of downs eventually descending to Shanklin’s beach and a rewarding Mr Whippy 99!

All that we had to do now was re-cement our false teeth and again enjoy the Ryde home (apologies for the pun 😊).

Graham Willoughby

Hollycombe Steam Fair

It was a chilly evening but the weather was clement. The venue has a collection of paraphernalia that is all steam driven. For a few weekend evenings in autumn, the park opens its collection of late Victorian and Edwardian fairground rides so visitors can take a stroll down memory lane.



One evening in early October, a rather limited number of us, together with the family, took the opportunity to go on the swings, carousels, big wheel and two narrow gauge railway rides. Plus, a visit to the silent movie theatre – complete with piano playing compère – showing Laurel & Hardy shots. To add to all this fun, we were treated to a fire eating act!

Unfortunately, the big wheel broke down just as our narrator had reached the head of the queue – well it is 120-years old! This was much to the relief of the wife who wasn't too keen on the idea – last time she got stuck at the top!

It was lovely to see that the grandchildren can still have fun with the oldies and candy-floss is still a big hit!

John Clayton

Winter cruise, Chichester



On 5 December, my wife and I partook on a winter cruise on the picturesque Chichester Canal. The weather was sunny, dry, around 7°C and the mercury was rising – just! Once boarded the festive decorated canal boat Richmond, we were shown to our table and greeted with a glass of prosecco.

After the skipper had given us a H&S briefing (hopefully not to be needed) we set off for the open sea – well open canal. Travelling at walking pace speed down the canal was just right

to take in the scenery – from looking at the cartoon/festive characters dotted along the canal bank to the wildlife going about their business.



Throughout the trip we received various courses: cream tea comprising of festive sandwiches, scones with jam & cream, cakes, bottomless cups of tea & coffee, plus warming mulled wine.

A nice relaxing trip with a friendly crew who are all volunteers. A return visit in the summer with the grandchildren will be well worthwhile.



David Lattimer



Visit to Hinton Ampner: 11/12/19

With Christmas fast approaching it was time to get into the seasonal spirit with a trip out to view the Yuletide decorations at this lovely National Trust house.

The trust had used Aesop's Fables as a theme with rooms dedicated to different tales. We had: the Hare & the Tortoise, Fox & the Grapes, Lion & the Mouse, plus others – decorated with dried flower displays, wreaths, trees and models – all as it may have been in late Victorian times.

A group of 20 of us took the opportunity of whiling away the morning exploring the gardens, café and meandering around the house before adjourning to the Hinton Arms for a pleasant and well organised lunch.

John Clayton



Tempsford

Bressingham Steam & Gardens: 14/08/19

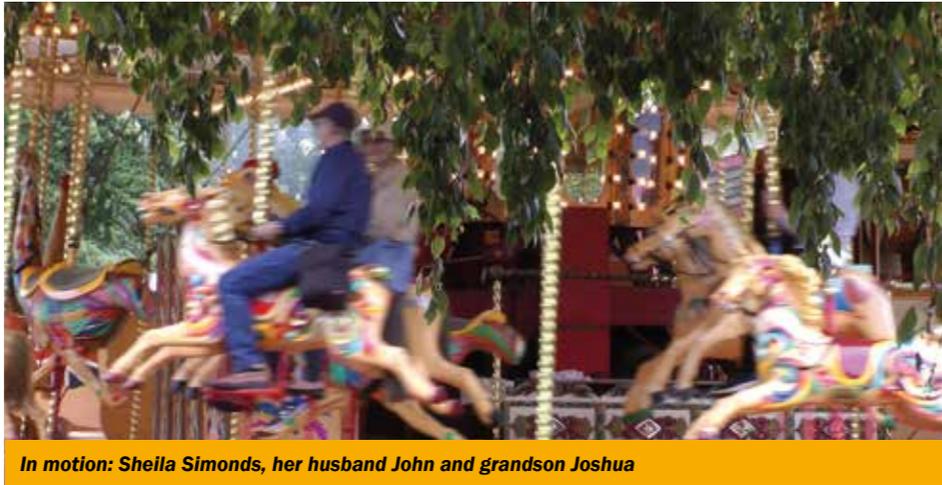
We visited on what turned out to be rather a wet day from around mid-day. Fortunately, it was expected and our group of 14 were suitably attired. There were three separate steam train rides, mostly in open carriages, and the gardens were quite stunning.



As the rain intensity increased, we migrated to the museum which had many interesting exhibits focussed mainly on the Dad's Army television series. All present deemed the visit a success.



The initial group of participants was larger but, unfortunately, one member had an accident on holiday and was unable to attend with her husband and



In motion: Sheila Simonds, her husband John and grandson Joshua



two grandchildren; another two couples were also unwell at the time.

Here is a link to a video record of our visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xv10N-HNKyg>

Paxton Pitts: 19/09/19

There were nine participants for our visit where we joined other members of the public for a walk around the lakes. Our guide informed everyone about the bird life – binoculars were essential! We followed this with a lunch at The Barley Mow in St. Neots for which there were 12 diners – there should have been 14 but I failed to get the message about the change of venue to one couple – my apologies!

Walk, talk and lunch: 18/10/19

There were 19 members for the talk and buffet lunch at The Anchor, Great Barford. This time the subject was The Queen's Official Image Library. We were addressed by Michael O'Keefe, in charge of the library, which was set up in order to control the replication of images of the 'Major Royals' in this digital age. We were treated to a



Coffee at the Danish Camp



Rescued 'Slippery Sid'

fascinating insight into some of the workings of the royal family.

In the morning, seven of the group took a two-mile walk from Great Barford to The Danish Camp, Willington, for a coffee and then back to The Anchor to join the others for lunch. On route we encountered a lost dog (which some of the group helped reunite with its owner) and Slippery Sid (removed from its dangerous sunbathing spot in the middle of the footpath/cycle way).

Ely Cathedral: 22/10/19

Nine of us visited Ely Cathedral which was an addition to the published list of events and organised by Stephen Jarvis.

On meeting our guide, we were rewarded with an inspirational tour of this beautiful edifice. After a convivial lunch we went back to the cathedral to visit the stained-glass museum which provided an insight into the 300-year history of stained glass.





Members outside Ely Cathedral



Lunch: 12/11/19

We tried a new venue for our lunch – the refurbished Highwayman in Eaton Socon. We enjoyed the food, friendly/helpful service and a good chinwag.

Christmas celebration: 10/12/19

Our Christmas celebration was again at the Pavenham Park Golf Club. Thirty-seven of us had sole use of the upstairs function room with its own bar and dedicated staff. The food and

service were exemplary and the table quiz, organised by John Busby, greatly assisted conversation among those at each table.

The aim was to identify each of the people in the photographs of which there were about 30. Each person on the winning table received a lottery scratch card for the next day's draw and, guess what, one couple won! John and Lou declared that they were off to Mauritius but felt that their winning would hardly pay for the table wine!

New Year events

Our first lunch of the new decade will be on 6 February when we plan to return to the Barley Mow in Eaton Socon. Our previous visit had been a replacement for the Eaton Oak, which was at the time closed for refurbishment. We understand that has been completed beautifully so plan to incorporate that venue into our schedule at some point.

On 10 March there will be a talk by the 'Campaign to Protect Rural England', combined with a buffet lunch at The Anchor, Great Barford.

Coming events

Our committee will meet shortly to make decisions based on replies to the questionnaire we issued before Christmas – essentially deciding which (if any) of the proposed day trips can justify the cost of a coach.

Harold Thompson

Waterbeach

As an area, we continue to see a healthy rise in new member applications which should bring new ideas and energy to the Fellowship Trust.

Our current membership is 80 and now more than ever it includes colleagues from all parts of our large geographic area. Therefore, when planning area events, we continue to be mindful of distances involved for some to travel.

On 29 August 2019, 14 of our members enjoyed afternoon tea at Congham Hall near King's Lynn, Norfolk.



Afternoon tea



Congham Hall, Norfolk



A good gathering of 24 members enjoyed a superb lunch in a private dining room at Brisley Bell, north of Dereham, on 31 October 2019.



Sadly, through unforeseen circumstances, we were forced to cancel our Christmas lunch which was planned for 11 December 2019.

We are currently starting to look at the structure for our plans and events during 2020.

Alison Alexander

DOLPHIN EMOTIONS... *ambition achieved!*

<http://weprotect.zoomarine.pt/en/>



PICTURED: MUM,
SANDRA AND SISTER,
LISA AT THE LUNA
VILLAGE ALVOR
HOTEL, PORTUGAL:
14-24 MAY 2019

I can't remember when it became my ambition to swim with dolphins. I know I was very young. As 'giddy as a kid' at mid-40's (ahem!) I achieved my life-time ambition!

On arrival in Alvor, after checking in and having a good look around etc, we enquired at the reception desk about swimming with dolphins. Obviously, I'd already researched where to go but didn't think for one minute we'd be able to make reservations. To my absolute joy we were booked in the next morning at 10am for a 'dolphin emotions' experience at Zoomarine, Albufeira! My worry then was would I actually get any sleep that night as I was so excited!

Thankfully I did, woke early 'full of beans' and couldn't wait to get going. Albufeira is halfway between Faro airport and Alvor so we decided to get a taxi as it was a fairly early start.

After checking in, we were taken to 'Sam's' dolphin enclosure (named after the first rescued male). There were 10 of us in

total and we were kitted out with full wetsuits, plus a bonus of free branded flipflops & towel. After a quick coffee, cake if you fancied, we were taken to see a half-hour video/presentation to explain all about Zoomarine itself and the dolphin's anatomy – fascinating!

Sam was, as far as they know, the oldest living dolphin at 50! In the wild they live between 30-35 if they're lucky because they have to escape predators/disease and find food. There are now about 27 dolphins in total at Zoomarine. Sam and Alpha were the initial breeders.

After washing our feet in disinfectant we walked into the huge pool area consisting of three separate interconnecting pools. We were split into two groups of five – based on nationalities and language understanding (the trainers are skilled at being multi-lingual).

Now, some might say that this is an unacceptable way to achieve your ambition – being in a man-made environment – and I would normally agree. However, once I saw the relationships between trainers and dolphins I was completely at ease and awe!



We were gently introduced to Alpha, Dino and Yara – feeling their skin (which is not rubbery (contrary to what my husband has always said) – he calls them "Rubber tubes!") They feel smooth and fleshy – much like ourselves'. The trainers communicate with the dolphins using hand signals. They love being touched, kissed on the nose, having fish treats for every skill they show you and waved off to 'go play' – jumping/twisting displays resulting in more fish and kisses on the nose.

There are places to avoid touching them: around the eyes and airhole as they're very sensitive. Also, their dorsal fins. What's fascinating is that, like us, they have digits! On the back of the dorsal fins they have ridged areas – so to speak – and that's how they can tell them apart. They also have 11 different voices of communication – wow!

After about 10 minutes of touching and getting to know Alpha, Dino and Yara, it was time for a one-on-one photograph or, if you were in pairs/couples', joint photographs. Then it was time to play with them!

Depending on size, age and the dolphin's skills (as they are like us – better at some and not others), we all had a treat. Whether it was: a belly ride with one dolphin; arms out with a dolphin each side holding their fins and flying you down the pool; two dolphins using their noses (one on each foot) to

propel you along at a very fast pace; or dancing with them – the Salsa or the Waltz (either were great fun to do/watch).

It was the fastest two hours of my life and such a wonderful, beautiful encounter that I'll never forget. However, I would recommend buying the video and one/some professional photographs. We've watched the video so many times and it brings every emotion back! And of course, the money is used to great pioneering use – rescuing, rehabilitating, stimulating, training, feeding, learning and loving these astounding, intelligent, gentle mammals.

"I'm blown away with my experience and at peace that I achieved my ambition."

And, you must see the dolphin show! It took my breath away! It demonstrates the mutual relationships between trainers/dolphins – respect, admiration, skill, love, fun and much more...

Andrea McDaid

SEE OVER FOR MORE ABOUT ZOOMARINE...



FACTS...

<http://weprotect.zoomarine.pt/en/>
Visit their website for many more...



| SCIENCE

- Sharing knowledge stimulates joint growth. Mindful of this reality, Zoomarine took the early commitment to promote the sharing of knowledge, in addition to a continued investment in science and innovation.
- Our philosophy is to contribute to a more effective protection of species in the wild, as well as the increase in the welfare of animals under human care.

| IN CONSTANT EVOLUTION

- When it comes to knowledge there's always room for growth. Zoomarine's policy has always been guided by continuous investment in innovation in several of the park's intervention areas. Whether in husbandry and animal welfare, rehabilitation of stranded specimens, or education, our teams at Zoomarine are dedicated to finding different and better ways of addressing any challenge that we might face.
- Given the zoological diversity at Zoomarine, its rehabilitation of marine species, and a strong investment in marine mammals and birds training, our park constitutes a privileged location for scientific studies.
- Aware of this reality, Zoomarine has a policy of collaboration with external researchers, domestic and foreign, to contribute to science and the knowledge on the species with which we work; or by developing projects that are designed and carried out by the park's own researchers.

| TRAINING

- Zoomarine's husbandry practice, regarding most specimens under our care, and especially marine mammals and birds, is based on positive reinforcement training. This training is particularly important given our preventive medicine approach because all our specimens are subjected to regular medical check-ups, just like us.
- Training voluntary medical behaviours allows for medical check-ups and exams to be performed without stress to the animals,

- veterinary and trainers teams. This allows a more reliable evaluation of the individuals' clinical condition.
- Additionally, this approach enables the participation of our specimens in science projects to be a positive moment, as the species are free to participate or not in the sessions.

| ANIMAL WELFARE

- Zoomarine, through its Veterinary Medicine Department and Rehabilitation Center of Marine Species, continually invests in finding new and more efficient ways of dealing with the welfare problems that might arise in our specimens as well as those that we rehabilitate.
- This investment allows us to be ever more efficient, both in addressing situations that may involve the welfare of the specimens and in preventing those situations.

| SHARING KNOWLEDGE

- For Zoomarine it is essential to share the knowledge we obtain through our hard work. For that reason, through presentations at technical meetings or by direct assistance to those who contact us, Zoomarine shares with the whole zoological community its success stories (e.g. in the fields of veterinary medicine, training, rehabilitation, education), but also its unsuccessful ones, so we can all grow together.
- This way, we believe, we can benefit both the specimens under human care and the ones in the wild.

| BIOLOGICAL DATABASE

- Whenever possible, Zoomarine collects biological information (e.g. blood samples), both from our collection specimens and from the ones that stand in our coastline, to create a database that can be used in studies regarding the species of which they belong to.
- This database is regularly made available to external researchers, that can count on an important and unique source of information.