March 2013

Dear Member

As I write, I’m thinking “Is it ever going to get warm”? Well, let’s hope so because our first outing this year is to Kew Gardens on 8th May.

I’m sure you are all aware that Kew houses many tropical plants as well as English countryside flowers. Kew Palace is also set in the gardens, on the banks of the Thames, and was built in 1631 by a London merchant. From modest beginnings it became the favourite family home of George III, Queen Charlotte and some of their 15 children. The rooms have recently been restored to their original Georgian splendour, appearing as they would have done in 1804 and last year the Palace was opened to the public.

The Kew Explorer – a hop on, hop off land train – is a 40 minute tour around the gardens, with commentary.

Lunches are available; a light lunch consisting of a freshly-made boxed sandwich, a bowl of soup and freshly-brewed tea or coffee, or a Chef’s daily hot meal with a slice of home-made loaf cake and freshly-brewed tea or coffee. I intend to apply for vouchers so that you can eat when it suits you.

Getting to Kew is easy; Kew Gardens is the last but one stop on the District Line to Richmond (about 50 minutes from Mile End station) or London Overground from Stratford. These trains run at quarter past the hour and then every 20 minutes and will take about one hour. A 10 minute walk will take you from Kew Gardens station to the Victoria Gate entrance to the gardens, where I suggest we meet at 11 am. I then propose that after a quick coffee, we tour the Palace, following which you are free to have a meal, ride on the Explorer, stroll around the gardens and return home at your leisure.

The cost of entrance to the gardens, tour of the Palace, travel on the Explorer and a meal voucher will be a subsidised sum of £7 per person. Please complete and return the attached reply slip to reach me no later than 20th April.

I have been advised that no trips down the Thames to Southend will be available until the autumn, so instead I am planning the following: 12th June – day trip to Worthing; 10th July – visit to Wimpole Hall (National Trust) in Cambridgeshire. Full details will follow nearer the time.

BERYL RYAN WRITES:
Visit to the Cliffs Pavilion, Southend-on-Sea, to see “Birds of a Feather” on Wednesday 13th March 2013:
Over the past couple of years we have grown accustomed to seeing stage versions of television sit-coms based on the actual scripts. “Birds of a Feather” is different as it appears to be an entirely different story and re-introduces the audience to the characters Sharon, Tracey and Dorien in the present day.
Some things, of course, never change. In 2012 just as in 1998, sisters Tracey and Sharon still have husbands doing time and Tracey’s son is now a very stroppy teenager. Dorien is still in search of a wealthy Mr Right and in the interim has gone into care home management. That’s when things start to go wrong for all three women, when she asks Sharon and Tracey to give her some assistance!

What was quite unusual was that the two sisters received audience applause as they first walked on the stage but there would have been many in the audience who would have followed the series each week and would have been very familiar with the three characters and, of course, playing in a theatre in Essex was quite significant as the TV series was set in Chigwell in Essex, so I expect this may account for a fairly packed audience to an afternoon matinée.

I think we all laughed quite a lot, even though it was a bit near the mark in places. Going to Southend is a good day out as things have improved quite a lot down there. On a good day, which this was, apart from still being very cold, it really is very pleasant to combine the trip to the theatre with a nice brisk walk along the seafront, to perhaps take in a little retail therapy as it has quite a good shopping area, or to take refreshments in one of the many eateries.

Yours sincerely

Beryl

Beryl Paine
Treasurer/Social Secretary