

MUSEUM MIND STRETCHER

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On Friday, 25th November '94 Dover Society members and friends met at Dover Museum for an evening devised by Philomena Kennedy, entitled "Museum Mind Stretcher".

Now Fridays for me are often a time just to 'flop'. The week at work has finished, the weekend just begun and I can usually just about manage to lift a glass of wine as I sink into an armchair with my book or the TV controls.

On the 25th I arrived home, ate a light tea and changed into casual clothes (including a large sloppy jumper which I was later to wholeheartedly regret) and our party of four set off with some trepidation to the Museum.

Our first surprise on arrival was that after selecting a card with a letter on it we realised that the four of us were to go in different directions for the rest of the evening. We said our farewells and each looked for the table with a corresponding letter attached to it which was to be our 'base'. Here we met up with our team members and new friends. This initial period was a time to dawdle amongst the exhibits on the middle floor and to chatter. However, idle chatter was not to figure largely once we had collected our question books and were able to start.

My first reaction on seeing the questions was one of *horror*. How on earth would we be able to find answers to the dozens of questions in the allotted time? My team, fighting back the panic, decided we needed a strategy . . . the problem was — what strategy? Others were already moving off with pens and books, looking very organised and muttering in conspiratorial whispers. (Goodness, I was beginning to feel hot! Was it panic making my temperature soar?)

Decisions — Yes, we would tackle the exhibition floor first. One of us would hold the booklet and write down the answers (whilst searching) and the other two would read, memorise the questions and go off in search of answers. (All questions were based on museum exhibits and displays). I tried to remember two or three questions and set off. The trouble was that by the time I had stood and read the information on the first few exhibits concerning where and when and how shells had fallen on Dover, I had forgotten the precise nature of the questions! Back to base. Well, that was reassuring — at least neither of the other two had had much luck yet. Right — one question at a time from now on (oh for a sparkling intellect and a sharp eye).

Eventually the three of us moved to the top floor and a change of scene. Each of us was feeling a little more confident now, but by the time we had struggled with the

costs of building the castle and the harbour and various other fascinating facts and figures, we felt it was time to give the ground floor a whirl. Actually it was refreshing to go back to the beginning as it were, and read about the Saxons, Jutes and Roman dormice. I became aware that through the heat and despair I was actually enjoying myself, but too late – time was up and we dutifully reported to the middle floor, handed in our booklet for marking and (praise to Joan Liggett and friends) made straight for the wine and scrumptious hot and tasty delicacies that awaited us. Thus refreshed we waited for news of the results.

A sense of dismay followed the announcement that Part 2 booklets were ready for collection. Still, there weren't so many questions and we did have a better idea of how to cope this time. We marked each question with a code to identify which floor we felt the answer was to be found on and away we went. Despite the electric fans that were now blowing cool air on to passers-by (what bliss to study the information next to a fan) I was steadily melting. More stairs, another floor — had we misread the question about the man who had died in the last riot in Dover — or was it that he'd started it? I could well imagine that he might be the cause of yet another quite soon! Time had beaten us yet again, but tired and pleased with ourselves we settled back to another glass of wine and just a little more food.

I found the other three I had started out with. (We hadn't missed each other) and we were almost ready to say our goodbyes when the raffle was announced. I had won a bottle of wine (well, that would come in useful for the following Friday evening) and what was this? . . . My husband had been part of the winning team! Complete disbelief on my part. Whenever I had *raced* past him he always seemed to be ambling in a very leisurely manner or poised deep in thought. I must try to find out what their strategy had been — might be useful next year!

Oh yes — and thanks to everyone who planned and executed the evening. Just one word in case there is another one next year — the invitation should carry a Dover Society Health Warning:

This evening could seriously stretch not only your minds, but your legs, your stamina, and possibly your patience!

DOVER SOCIETY PROJECT SUPPORT GROUP

Members are invited to join our small and select group on the ground – our aim is to ensure that our projects are successful. It gets us out for a couple of hours now and again and we experience things others never do!

Contact John Owen on 01304 202 207
