

December 2017 - Behind the Doors of the Magic Circle

Jason Deverall amazed us with his magic tricks interspersed with some fascinating insights into the history and workings of the Magic Circle. He didn't produce any rabbits out of his hat but a bottle of wine appeared from nowhere! All his tricks had us baffled and we were none the wiser as to how they were done. We had a packed hall for the last meeting of the year and a table groaning with Secret Santa gifts.

November 2017 - Annual Meeting

We had an amazing attendance on a dark, wet November evening for our Annual Meeting. Our president was re-elected to serve another year and we sadly said goodbye to two of our committee members. The business part of the evening was followed by a shwapping event.

October 2017 - A Tale of Two Oceans

Chris Martin, a local lad, regaled us with his fascinating story about how he 'accidentally' rowed the Atlantic and then, as if that was not enough, undertook to row the Pacific with an ex-marine he had just met! They made it but had set out to row 5000 miles in 4.5 months and ended up rowing 7000 miles in just over 6 months and ran out of food before they reached San Francisco. An amazing feat that has not yet been matched.

September 2017 - Battersea Dogs Home

Ali Watts talked about the work, history and philosophy of the Battersea Dogs and Cats Homes (BDCH), which had opened in 1860 as the Temporary Home for Lost and Starving Dogs in a stable in an Islington mews. Ali was accompanied by her very friendly and inquisitive rescue dog Mabel. Mabel wandered amiably amongst all the rows in the room and seemed very much at home which, as Ali said, is testament to the good work done to help rehome dogs who may have been traumatised by previous owners. Ali described the new hospital facilities at BDCH and explained the different ways the animals are helped. Ali touched on a wide variety of topics relating to BDCH including:- its founder Mary Tealby, support pledged by prominent Victorians such as Charles Dickens, the taking in of cats in 1883, the establishment of the Old Windsor branch in 1979 and the controversy of breed standards.

July 2017 - Julia Cameron, 19th Century Photographer of Genius

Dr Judith Hill delivered an entertaining, illustrated and informative talk about the Victorian photographer, Julia Margaret Cameron (1815 - 79). Dr Hill started by outlining details of Julia's life and illustrated her character with amusing tales and anecdotes. Dr Hill went on to explain how Julia got involved with photography and ended with an assessment of her significance in the photography world.

June 2017 - Ascot Themed Social Evening

This month we had a social evening with a cake and a hat competition and various Ascot themed games. Some of our ladies acted as the jockeys representing the various teams with hilarious consequences. Everyone joined in the fun and came dressed to impress at the Races.

May 2017 - Lost Buildings of Runnymede

Emma Warren from Chertsey Museum talked to us about 'Lost Buildings of Runnymede'. Her fascinating topic covered the history and owners of Silverlands, Chertsey Abbey, Sayes Court, Durnford Mill, Princess Mary's Village Homes, Thorpe Lea house, the Market House in Chertsey, Woburn Farm, St Ann's House and St. Ann's Court. Many famous people have been associated with these buildings including Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck, a Rear Admiral, several Chertsey MPs, a Georgian courtesan, Noel Coward and Thomas Cranmer who wrote the 1547 Book of Common Prayer at Chertsey Abbey.

April 2017 - Cheerleading

Angela from Dancing Shoes Dance School had our members out on the floor learning routines which included moves such as 'daggers' and 'candlesticks'. Pom poms were shaken with gusto and the temperature in the room soared as the routines were "perfected"! Lisa valiantly volunteered to be hoisted into the air and lifted up and down repeatedly. Sal wasn't sure if she volunteered but somehow ended up doing a solo Gangnam Style!

March 2017 - Blessed are the Cheesemakers

Our speaker was John Pearson who gave a fascinating insight into the world of cheese with his talk entitled “Blessed are the Cheesemakers”, the phrase taken from Monty Python’s Life of Brian film. John is a food technologist who had worked for M&S firstly involved with bread and wine and finishing his career as a dairy buyer. He regaled us with several amusing anecdotes about episodes in his working life, including one about some interesting tuna pate, and went on to describe the cheese making processes and the vagaries of the seasonal demands for different dairy products. We finished the evening by each tasting three types of cheddar, an enriching experience for our tastebuds.

February 2017 - My Experience on the Apprentice

Our speaker was Ifti Chaudhri, Deputy Mayor of Runnymede and Wendy one of our Treasurers put questions to Ifti about his time on The Apprentice in 2007. Wendy started by asking him to describe his background and what had motivated him to apply to be a contestant. Ifti described his excitement on seeing the American version of the show and his love of being a salesman. Ifti went on to describe the initial interview process and its timeline, stressed the need for secrecy and made reference to the psychological testing he had to undergo. He admitted that it was a ‘dog eat dog’ process. He still keeps in touch with some fellow contestants. Wendy asked what Lord Sugar is actually like and Ifti said that he thought he was a very fair person but that his decisions are paramount in the whole process.

January 2017 - Argentine Tango

Marion Greenwood and David Thomas entertained us with a brief history of tango aided by music and video clips. It started in the working class and migrant quarters of Buenos Aires in the 1920s. He clarified the numerous misconceptions about tango dancing, portrayed in popular culture as far back as Rudolf Valentino films from the 1920s and, more recently, the Strictly Come Dancing versions. Argentine tango is a very social dance, largely improvised, with a party atmosphere, essentially walking with a partner to the music beats. Numerous ladies tried out the steps and everyone enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere.