

IPS PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, DECEMBER 2021

By John Dawson, DipCom, FIPS

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,
Today, I am going to speak to you about one of the highlights of the year for me and that was when I went on holiday to Overstrand, near Cromer in North Norfolk.

After having gone on a cruise to St Petersburg and the Baltic States to celebrate my birthday 3 years ago, I went on another cruise the following year on the Magellan to Iceland and we were supposed to visit the Faroe Islands but this was cancelled owing to bad weather.

I had really caught the bug and enjoyed going on cruises and intended going on a cruise last year but this was cancelled owing to Covid 19 and as a result I had a stay in the UK at the Treloyan Manor Hotel in St Ives, Cornwall. This was a Christian Guild holiday that I thoroughly enjoyed and, as I was unable to go on a cruise this year, again owing to Covid 19 restrictions, I planned to go back to the Treloyan Manor Hotel but unfortunately when I phoned to make a booking I was surprised and saddened to be informed that the hotel and Christian Guild Holidays (The trading name of Methodist Guild Holidays) had gone under receivership and the hotel had been sold to another organisation. It was very sad and disappointing to learn this news because Christian Guild Holidays had been in existence for more than 100 years and now it was no more.

I wondered what I would do but I could remember I had a piece of paper that someone had given me when I was on holiday at another Christian Guild holiday at Kents Bank in the Southern Lake District in June 2015, with the names of two Christian Endeavour Holiday Centres and when I phoned to enquire about their holidays I was delighted to learn that they had a singles holiday coming up at the end of August for the first week in September. I booked the holiday and I had a wonderful time.

The first good and pleasant surprise was when I booked my train journey to Cromer. I could hardly believe it when I was told that if I booked 2 single tickets using my Senior Railcard I could get a single each way for £8.55 and this meant £17.10 a return all the way from Mortlake where I live to Cromer. The journey was very pleasant and when I arrived at Cromer a taxi took me to The Pleasaunce, the Christian Endeavour Holiday Centre that was previously the home of Lord and Lady Battersea. Lady Battersea was a member of the Rothschild family and Lord Battersea was a member of the wealthy Flower brewing family.

Lord Battersea died in 1907 and was buried in the grounds of St. Martin's churchyard, Overstrand but his widow continued to stay at The Pleasaunce until her death in 1931. Lady Battersea was buried in a Jewish Cemetery in Willesden. The property was then split up and sold as separate lots. The Pleasaunce and garden was purchased in 1937 by Christian Endeavour Holiday Homes Ltd who run it as a holiday centre for Christians and others from all over the world.

The house is set in several acres of ground with excellent views and is very near the beach where I went every day.

In the mornings there was an optional event before breakfast of going to a time of praise. When I went there I took a copy of my shorthand bible and I was surprised to learn that none of the people present, although they had been churchgoers for many years and at least one was in his eighties, knew about the bible being written in Pitman's shorthand but they are pleased to know now.

The meals at The Pleasaunce were excellent and each day we went on various excursions to a wide range of places in beautiful Norfolk including Cromer, Sheringham and Wroxham.

Cromer is a typical holiday resort with a pier with a theatre on it, the Pavilion Theatre. It is surrounded by beautiful countryside and fortunately the weather when I was there was very good and ideal

for walking along the coast and in the countryside. There are also a wide range of hotels in the area including the Hotel de Paris that I visited on the sea front and this hotel has been visited by royalty going back more than 100 years.

On one of the days I had the pleasure of going to Cromer with my group by bus – using my freedom pass, incidentally, which was a big surprise and benefit and then we walked for more than an hour through fields with sheep, cattle and other animals to reach our destination, Felbrigg Hall. Felbrigg was built in 1620 and has been owned since then by four different families, the Windhams, the Lukins, the Kettons and lastly by Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer. Felbrigg Hall is set in many acres of land, has a very beautiful and well-kept walled garden and has many rooms reflecting the stories of the four Norfolk families who owned and added to it over hundreds of years. The estate, set in 520 acres, has a beautiful landscape with a lake and woods. Felbrigg Hall was bequeathed to the National Trust following the death in 1969 of Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer the last squire of Felbrigg, a single man with no children, whose younger brother Richard was killed in action during the Second World War in 1941.

It was a similar story to The Pleasaunce where I was staying as Lord and Lady Battersea had no children and in her will Lady Battersea said that the property should be sold for the use of Christian purposes and that is why Christian Endeavour Holiday Centres acquired the property.

On another occasion I visited Sheringham which is another very beautiful Norfolk holiday centre by the sea where I bought a fridge magnet bearing the words Oh I do like to be beside the seaside, a song that I frequently sing on my visits to Brighton and other coastal resorts as the words are true and meaningful for me.

(John then sung this song and those present were pleasantly surprised and happily joined in).

I was brought up beside the sea in the coastal town of Stevenston, Ayrshire and I do always like to be beside the sea. I also visited the Salvation Army when I was in Sheringham. The Salvation Army has a soft spot for me because the first Sunday School that I went to at a very early age was the Salvation Army in Saltcoats next to Stevenston on the Ayrshire coast.

I also had an interesting encounter with a cat in Sheringham because as I was sitting on a bench with a fellow holiday maker (member of my group) having lunch the cat jumped on to the bench and stretched its paw out to grab the sandwich from my companion's hand. I chased the cat away after it scratched my friend's hand. I believe that the cat was a wild cat and not tame at all!

On another occasion we travelled by steam train on the North Norfolk Railway – also known as the Poppy Line - from Sheringham to the Georgian town of Holt where we had lunch at Bakers & Larners Department Store (where I am told the Duchess of Cambridge has been seen shopping). It was a wonderful experience for me to travel in an old-fashioned train through scenic Norfolk in the manner in which people would have travelled more than sixty years ago. This railway line attracts around 165,000 passengers each year. I can recall as a young child in the primary school waiting with my Aunt Nan on the platform at Stevenston station for the train to Edinburgh via Glasgow and shouting "It's a diesel, it's a diesel". I was so excited to see the modern diesel train compared to the old-fashioned trains powered by coal. The windows were windows that you could pull down and look out of and this was very dangerous. The doors were ones that you could pull open and this was equally dangerous. However, the company I was with was very pleasant and I had a very enjoyable trip to and from Holt from Sheringham. It is also very interesting to note that the majority of those involved with the daily running of the North Norfolk Railway are volunteers and they

On another occasion the group travelled by cars owned by other members of the group to Wroxham on the Norfolk Broads where

we enjoyed a very interesting trip on board the Queen of the Broads. During the trip one of the skippers on board was our tour guide and he talked to us about the wildlife, the houses, history and heritage of the area as we sailed through the Broads National Park.

In the evenings we had various things to do at The Pleasaunce, for example, dancing and on the last evening holiday makers were given the opportunity to express their talents by entertaining other guests with reading, reciting poems, playing the guitar or the piano, acting and singing and I was the last person to go on stage when I sung Nobody's Child, a favourite of mine that I sung firstly in public at the Boys' Brigade parents night in Ardeer Halls, Stevenston when I was about 12 years old. I feel confident about singing this song because even after a glass or two of whisky or wine I can always remember the words and I never want to get up and sing and forget my words.

In Overstrand we were also taken on a tour where we were shown the house where Winston Churchill and his wife Clementine holidayed many years ago named Chartwell.

I had a very good holiday at The Pleasance and would go back there again and recommend it to others.

On the last day of my holiday I shared a taxi from The Pleasance to Cromer Station with one of the other guests and we travelled from Cromer via Norwich on the train to Liverpool Street station.

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John concluded his speech by mentioning some interesting points

He was approached by a lady at the Metropolitan Police Wine Society on the last Thursday of August who presented him with several books that she had inherited from her aunt. The books were written in Pitman's shorthand and she only discovered that I was a shorthand writer because she had read an article about me

in the Formets newsletter earlier this year about me being President of the IPS. He now has the shorthand novels and short stories in his bookcase at home.

He has obviously been getting good publicity for the Society through the articles that have been written about him and the IPS since he became President in 2020.

Following the dreadful assassination of Sir David Amess John wrote to the Evening Standard about the security of MPs' staff. (You may recall that a member of Sir David's staff was present when the attack took place.) Here is a copy of the letter which was printed in the newspaper:

MPs should be protected and so must their staff

I am deeply saddened and shocked to learn of the death of Sir David Amess, a man whom I have known well for several years. I send my deepest sympathy and condolences to Lady Julia and her family.

Following the death of Sir David it is justified that there may be a lot of talk and hopefully action by police and other security officials about further protection for MPs.

However, I am very disappointed about the lack of talk and action on the future security of MPs' staff, who often accompany them to surgeries and other events. I would like to hear more of what the police and other security officials intend to do in order to make MPs' staff more secure when carrying their duties.

I have worked in Parliament for MPs for the past 12 years and the lack of emphasis on support for their staff is disappointing and alarming.

John M Dawson

Reply from Martin Bentham, Home Affairs Editor

Dear John

The risk to MPs' staff was demonstrated tragically by the killing of Andy Pennington, an assistant to the then Cheltenham MP Nigel Jones, during an attack in 2000 aimed at Mr Jones.

Today's employees should benefit from whatever extra protection is given to Parliamentarians in their surgeries in the wake of the murder of Sir David Amess. But all measures must be proportionate to the assessed risk and balanced too against the many other pressing demands on police resources.

Martin

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John has now sent us this Recollection about HM The Queen's Accession to the Throne

I recall a very vivid and pleasant memory of the story told to me by my friend Justin Welby (now the Archbishop of Canterbury) when we both lived and worked in Paris in the 1970s.

Justin informed me of the occasion when his mother, Jane Portal, a Pitman shorthand writer, was secretary to the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill in the 1950s. She travelled by car with him to the airport where he greeted the new Queen Elizabeth II upon her return to England following the death of her father. However, to my great delight, Justin told me that on the way to the airport Winston Churchill dictated to Jane and that she had used her Pitman shorthand skills to take the dictation.

John M Dawson