

Summer Outing to The Royal Hospital Chelsea Home of the Chelsea Pensioners



Statue of a Chelsea Pensioner
The centre of the Figure Court

We arrived at The Royal Hospital Chelsea at about mid-day, walked through the grounds to the cafe for lunch and were immediately impressed by the actual size of the site... huge military-style buildings and immaculately kept spacious lawns and gardens. There is obviously a need for the mobility scooters which are parked in regimental ranks outside all the main community rooms.

After lunch we assembled in The Visitor Centre for a short film about the RHC and to meet our two tour guides who gave us a 30 minute talk about their life as a Chelsea Pensioner.



Brian Cumming, chief Tour Guide,
who spent some of his service career in Hythe and who knows Hythe well.

Both were over eighty years old. They gave us the history, the facts and figures, they told us about some of their colleagues and spoke about their own personal story...standing the whole time (while we were all seated) and without any notes. Their stories were truly inspiring (and slightly naughty at times).

They then escorted us on a guided tour of the Hospital including the beautiful Chapel and the magnificent Great Hall, both of which were designed by Sir Christopher Wren, and the RHC Museum.



The Chapel



The Great Hall



Museum Exhibits

We passed their tennis courts and 'boules' pitch ; they have a cricket team and there was a game of bowls being played on the bowling green. Needless to say there's a pub called 'The Chelsea Pensioner'! These two gents were a mine of information; there didn't seem to be a question that they couldn't answer.



We were told how the residents live a very full and active life and all hobbies and interests are encouraged. Some are quite talented artists and musicians and one of our guides, Brian Cumming, is a photographer and has his own studio.

The infirmary looks after pensioners when they are ill and if necessary in their final days. They only ever have to leave the RHC if they become a danger to themselves or to other people...or if they get married.

We left feeling rather humbled, but proud of these elderly 'guys and gals' who spent and often risked their lives serving their country. How wonderful and entirely appropriate that they are able to live their retirement years being so well cared for in the same military atmosphere in which they have spent most of their adult lives.

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