

## The Gibraltar Reunion Report

**Wed:** It was on the Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept, when we all met at Manchester Airport; this several hours before the take-off scheduled at 1605 hrs for Gibraltar. By the time we arrived, alongside Lloyd & Anne Rosentall, everyone else was anxiously waiting – we had the tickets, hotel transfer paperwork and the hotel booking confirmation! It was obvious some were not pleased; they had already been in place 2 hours before.

The aircraft left on time, but it was noticeable how the security searches had intensified since our last overseas reunion, something we all welcomed. The flight was uneventful, apart from Carole Winnett dilemma of having to place her legs in the aisle because of limited leg room.

On arrival we all had to adjust our watches one hour forward, more importantly, would we still make the hotel bar in time! Transfer was simple and quick (10 minutes), although booking in to the hotel was rather slow because of only one receptionist dealing with us. Once we complained, things quickly improved. We all agreed we are more ready to complain about things now - perhaps something to do with age!

We were all on parade in the bar area 30 minutes after booking in, someone did ask why we didn't need blue cards, fondly remembering the old blue cards for arriving at RAF Stations! The talk, after a few drinks, quickly turned to absent friends, along with who was the youngest and oldest in the group – the ladies appeared to keep quite on this matter!

We ate in the hotel the first night, promising to locate other places to eat in the coming days.

**Thurs:** It had already been decided that we would just chill out on the first day, so we got a bus right outside the hotel (the senior citizen hoppa ticket was a bargain at £1.20, allowing us to use as many buses/journeys as needed in a day!) getting off at Market Square, close to the Main Street, where all the shops were located. Having spent a few hours in Main Street, we took refreshments in "Casemates Square": the surrounding buildings once housed British soldiers. Casemates Square was to become our main watering hole throughout our stay, with one particular bar giving us excellent service.

After this, once back at the hotel, we would Parade in the hotel bar before our evening meal, this was taken at a nearby village restaurant (down many steps!!) overlooking the sea.

**Fri:** Lloyd & Anne Rosentall had kindly organised a dolphin boat trip, which left the harbour at 14:30 hours. Whilst waiting for the boat, we took refreshments at a harbour bar (with a 10% discount given on our dolphin tour tickets!) The trip was excellent, giving us a first-class view of the Rock, along with the Spanish Mainland, not forgetting the Gibraltar runway that we passed close to and saw an aircraft landing as we returned in to harbour. We saw many dolphins during the trip, all amazed at their speed, agility and how they rode the bows of passing ships.

**Sat:** Two taxis arrived first thing to take us on a tour of the upper Rock; this turned out to be excellent value, with visits to St Michael's caves (beats Cheddar Gorge Caves anytime!), the Gibraltar Apes feeding area and the Siege Tunnel, which is located in the North front of the Rock, Where British soldiers fought off the Spanish. The trip was informative, especially for those who had the fortune to have the English driver, who was amusing in every way.

We had intended going up in the Cable Car to the top of the Rock, which our Dolphin boat trip ticket had included, but the queue was excessive. We took the opportunity of visiting the Trafalgar cemetery: the sailors', who lost their lives at the Battle of Trafalgar, are buried in this plot: it is in a lovely setting and well cared for, too. It was strange to see, on our return to the hotel, that there were RN personnel (submariners) billeted waiting to join their ship.



**Sun:** *This was to be the day to visit the Spanish mainland, but after being given some background information on the nearby town it was decided to remain on the Rock and visit Europa Point, the far end of the Rock, making use of our bus hoppa ticket, when using 2 buses to get there. When we started the journey the Eastern side of the Rock was cloudy, but once we arrived at Europa Point, the sun was shining. We walked around the Point and then sat in a café taking tea and cakes, with ice cream to follow for some! The view from here, across the Gibraltar Straits, allowed you to clearly see the North African coast, with many ships going through the straits.*

*After this trip we returned to “Casemates Square” to our usual place for a meal and some drinks. The young Spanish waiter was first-class, along with being impressed about our group gathering, this was explained to him – for his charm alone, he earned himself a large tip each time he served us during our stay!*

*The last evening meal was taken in the hotel and we were served by a charming Romanian waitress who greatly impressed - the group tip given reflected this along with the commendation we made about her to the duty Manager.*

**Mon:** *We had to book out of the hotel by 1100 hrs, leaving our bags in the designated baggage room until our airport transfer bus arrived at 1830 hrs. Most of us decided we would make use of our Combined Dolphin trip ticket to go up in the Cable Car and this proved well worthwhile.*

*The view from the Cable Car and the top of the Rock was spectacular, helped by the resident monkeys putting on a show around the restaurant area at the top of the Rock, where the Cable Car stopped. Once back at the hotel, we killed time by waiting in a hotel lounge until the transport arrived to take us to the airport.*

*The journey home was smooth, that is until we landed at Manchester (2305 hrs), when we appeared to swerve on landing. Rather quickly, once we had collected our hold luggage, it was then time to say the usual goodbyes. Some would be making the journey directly home, whilst others would stop in nearby hotels until morning.*

*In summary, it was an excellent reunion, with no time wasted. The Hotel, although dated, gave us all sea view rooms, with much peace and quiet. One of our early objectives, of visiting Tangiers, had to be abandoned, mainly because of the cost involved, other than that we saw the Rock from all angles with many of us saying they would go back again, or even live there for a few months of the year – once the lottery had been won, naturally!*

*Thanks to all those who supported this reunion, and we hope to see you all in May down in Weymouth, with those others who can join us.*

*Steve/Dave*