

Bristol Balloon Festival 2011

11th ~14th August 2011. A long weekend with Mel Harvey and the Avon group MCC



This rally was organised by Avon group.

I had not rallied with them before, but was surprised at how many people I knew.



The Balloon Festival is organised by Cameron Balloons, who were celebrating their 40th anniversary. It was the 33rd annual festival of this exciting event.



We arrived on the Thursday with plenty of time to spare before the night glow. So after our dinner, we walked across the road to Ashton Court. We couldn't have been parked up any closer.



The night glow was spectacular. balloons fired the gas jets in time to music, which included the theme tunes from Mission Impossible; Indiana Jones; Slumdog Millionaire & the Lion King. There was hardly any room in the arena for them all. The larger ones were squeezing the smaller balloons to the back or front of the row. The atmosphere was amazing.



On the Friday, we got the park & ride into Bristol city. Neither Mel nor I had been there before. The ride in was short and soon we were getting off near to the SS Great Britain. To get there we crossed the harbour by river taxi. Immediately we were confronted by the "Matthew"



The Matthew was a caravel sailed by John Cabot in 1497 from Bristol to North America,. The crew consisted of only 18 people.



The SS Great Britain was launched in Bristol in 1843. Isambard Kingdom Brunel, conceived the groundbreaking combination of a screw propeller, an iron hull, and a massive steam engine. She was immediately successful - on her maiden voyage across the Atlantic the SS Great Britain easily broke the previous speed record.



The M shed is an ambiguous name for a museum, but it was very interesting and very new, only opening a few weeks previously. They did a very good cup of coffee too, and it was a sensible price!



Leaving the M Shed, we walked into the old part of Bristol. It is crammed full of history and some beautiful architecture. what a shame more wasn't preserved. We were particularly impressed by "The Old Fish Market", now a restaurant/pub



During the day, every day, weather permitting, a mass launch of balloons took place at 6am and 6pm. It was quite a sight to see. One afternoon we counted 88, and we are sure we missed a few.



Favourite balloons were "Churchill", who looked really down in the mouth while inflating, but in our opinion, was by far the largest there. Sadly he didn't fly.

The Palletways Dragon "Slick" was impressive. He carries 120,000ft of hot air (the equivalent to 3,400 washing machines!)



The Jaguar team had 2 balloons, one of which was in the shape of a jaguar car.

There were bees; monkeys; boxes of wine, a chicken, and even a panasonic battery flying.



The theme of the event was "Best of Bristol", and this extended to the food court, featuring produce from local farm shops, Bath Ales and locally made ciders. Of course there were international food stalls too, as it was an international event with balloons from Luxemburg & France



Following each evenings "Night Glow", there was a fire work display, which was also set to music. It was all very impressive and well organised.





Sunday afternoon we were treated to a flying display by the "Red Arrows".

They flew right over our camp site. I'm sure we had a better view than we would have had in the official arena.

We cannot wait for next years event. (Oh, and to top it all I won a prize in the raffle!

