

That's Entertainment!

Visit to Thursford, Tuesday 12th November

I'm sure we all remember *The Good Old Days*, *Saturday Night at the London Palladium* etc, before Saturday night viewing became quite boring (I'll exempt *Strictly* of course. End of Moan.) I can't remember the last time I saw a good, old-fashioned variety show, until now! This was an additional trip on the Club calendar, and what a welcome one it turned out to be.

We set off from Rustons at 9am and stopped for a snack at Dobbies near King's Lynn. (Not Dobby the house elf from Harry Potter, though I think the serving staff could have done with him!) It appears it is closing at the end of the month, and the service was sadly not what it used to be. At about 12, we headed off to Thursford Christmas Show, many of us for the first time.

The Thursford Christmas Spectacular began in a small shed, built around the famous Wurlitzer organ which featured in the show. Originally the brain-child of John Cushing OBE, it has expanded from an audience of 600 to sell out audiences of 1,400 for its whole season, totalling over 100,000 visitors a year to darkest Norfolk. There were even coaches from Eastbourne! It is also the home of a world famous collection of organs and steam engines, begun by John's father, George, and a 19th century gondola carousel, so there is something to suit all tastes. These magnificent engines were bedecked in the festive spirit with polar bears, toys, reindeer-you name it; a delight for children- of all ages!!

As for the show itself- well, where do I start? Spoiler Alert- if you are going independently, stop reading here. There is a cast of 200 extremely talented dancers and musicians, with a 32 piece orchestra. They involved the audience beautifully by filling the side aisles with singers and penguins and –well, anything and everything. One of the most moving pieces was their rendition of Ave Maria by candlelight. Tiller Girl type dancers opened the show, causing many a male heart to flutter. For the ladies, there were two very hunky male acrobats, who performed amazing balancing acts, as did their female counterparts later in the show. A young lad performed miracles with his collection of diabolos. Accompanied by bagpipes, two bike riders balanced on their wheels in an intricate series of movements. A comedian hosted the show with jokes and some very entertaining repartee. There was every kind of music, including bagpipes, jigs with Irish dancing- it was a true variety show in every sense of the word: slick, professional and enthralling. The décor surrounding the stage glistened in the ever-changing spotlights, whilst coloured globes descended from the ceiling. It was truly magical.

The show lasted for the best part of three hours. Emerging into the darkness, we were dazed by the illuminations everywhere-from drummer boys to dragons. Finding our coach, we were very lucky in our journey home having a straight run, whilst we all compared notes on our favourite acts. Thank you to Jane who organised the trip and to Stewart for seeing us home safe at the end of a long day. Long, but magical. Entertainment in the truest sense of the word.

Barbara Pearce