

2023 Order of the Secret Monitor Sunday Lunch

Sunday 8th October was a gorgeous sunny day as members of Cheshire and North Wales OSM with their families and friends met at Cheshire View, Christleton for the annual Sunday Lunch.

It was a very well attended event with almost a hundred people attending.

This year there was also the added excitement of the announcement of the result of the charity virtual balloon race.

The PGSR Tony Stringer met and greeted all the arrivals to the lunch.

Barrie Billinge, the race organiser, had kept everyone up-to-date on the position of the leading balloons during the week of the race electronically, building the excitement.

At 1:00, before the meal, the PGSR welcomed everyone, then announced the winner, although he stated that he wanted the race to end 4 hours earlier when his balloon was in front, but this was disallowed by VAR.

Jennie Simcock daughter of Trevor won with a total distance of 16780km, and captured the first prize of a £50 voucher.

Second place went to Gary's Wanderings, owned by Gary Oates, whose balloon covered a distance of 16747km and took the second prize of a voucher for £30.00.

Last across the line, and winning a boobie prize of a £10 voucher was Monty finishing just 128km behind the winner. Monty was sponsored by Rob Nash, earning his place as a future candidate into the Order.

Chester Conclave No155 won the race of the Conclaves with a distance of 16652km. The Conclave will receive a bottle of Bombay Sapphire Gin to raffle at their next meeting.

So far, the balloon race raised an additional £359.40 for each of the two charities supported this year - Claire House Hospice and Vale of Clywd MIND DORIS.

With the excitement of the race over it was time for a very fine Sunday lunch.

It would not be a Masonic event without a raffle which this year raised an excellent £1,000 towards the PGSR's Benevolent Fund, and Tony thanked everyone for the generosity donating over 50 prizes and purchasing tickets.

With the meal over it was time for the raffle to be drawn, which brought the usual boos and cheers.

However, prizes appear to be fairly distributed throughout the room. Those that didn't win a prize won a smile or two.

Then it was over.

Special thanks go to Barrie Billinge for organising the Balloon Race, Paul Richards who had organised the event, and the entire staff at Cheshire View where the event ran smoothly and the food was enjoyed by all.

The whole atmosphere and general enjoyment of the afternoon reinforce the Order of the Secret Monitor as the friendly degree.

Derek Gaskell, Provincial Grand Counsellor.