

CAREFLIGHT & HAMBLEDON COTTAGE

The 23 February was a beautiful day and 42 of us departed Penshurst at 8.30 am with Pegasus driver Jeff. Today was a visit to CareFlight's Rapid Response Rescue Helicopter Service at Westmead, lunch at Merrylands RSL Club and a tour of pretty Hambledon Cottage at Parramatta. Firstly, though, in the park skirting Auburn Botanical Gardens, there was Liz's morning tea to enjoy. With such a full day ahead, it wasn't possible to spend time in the gardens themselves, but we made a promise to return to this inviting spot in the near future.



From there, it was a short drive to CareFlight which operates from the grounds of Westmead Hospital. John, our guide for the next two hours, joined us shortly after our arrival. He had the unfortunate job of telling us that their chopper was being serviced at another location, so there'd be no opportunity to see inside one of these amazing machines. However, we were ushered inside the hanger (definitely possible to eat off the floor) to the rear of the building where the life-like mannequin Elliot lay on a trolley surrounded by lifesaving equipment. He is just one of 20, all named, used in CareFlight's trauma care workshops around the country. John spoke of Elliot's incredible capabilities, before leading

us inside the office where the crew of four, including a specialist doctor and intensive-care paramedic/nurse, would normally be waiting. They work a 12-hour daylight shift only and can be in the air within three minutes of receiving an emergency call.

John led us to another building where we could sit in air-conditioned comfort while he spoke of this wonderful service. He was excellent and was more than happy to answer our questions. As they don't receive any government funding, a popular money-raiser is their CareFlight Bear and other merchandise. These were on display at the back of the room and, being the keen shoppers that we are, were quickly snapped up! We're also a generous group and made personal contributions which were gratefully accepted. So much so, that John presented us with a free Ballerina Bear, to be given to Graham after his name was drawn out of the hat. Needless to say it was quickly handed over to partner Patricia!!

A delicious buffet lunch was at Merrylands RSL Club. An extremely large and popular venue, it was already in full swing when we arrived. There was about an hour here, before re-boarding the coach bound for Hambledon Cottage. Here we were greeted by five volunteers, Les, Ken and three Margarets, and split into groups to alleviate congestion inside. The tour was well organised, but the rooms were tiny and it was hot, so some of us took refuge on shady seats scattered around the property. Information from their brochure states: "The cottage was built by John Macarthur in 1824 as a second house on his Elizabeth Farm estate. The resident most associated with Hambledon was Penelope Lucas, former governess to Macarthur's three daughters. It was she who named the family cottage after the township of Hambledon in Hampshire, England. It's built of rendered sandstock brick in the Colonial Georgian style and the joinery throughout is of Australian red cedar. Eventually, the cottage and its northern grounds were donated to the Parramatta City Council and they skilfully restored it. In the mid 1960s it was leased to Parramatta and District Historical Society for use as its headquarters and for display to the public as a house museum. The society lovingly furnished the cottage in the style of the 1820s -1880s period. These days, thousands of visitors are shown through it annually." The cottage is well cared for, there are several wonderful old trees, the grass is mown occasionally, but the grounds could do with some TLC. We noticed that the locals were using the property as a short-cut, so perhaps the council feels that it's not worthwhile.

It took just an hour to return to Penshurst where we arrived at 4.30 pm. It had been a great, but busy day. Lucky seat prizes were won by Phil R and Jan L.