

Charlottesville and Charlotte 2002 - Report by FF Cornwall club member Sara Cox

It is just possible that Cornish FF members are getting to like being Ambassadors !

We certainly had a fantastic time in the U.S.A. and were positively bowled over with American hospitality and kindness.

By various means we all arrived safely at Charlottesville airport, tired but smiling. Bags unpacked if you were lucky, and quickly out to the first of almost daily, fabulous dinner parties. Once settled, eager members were up bright and early next morning for the Mayoral welcome and interesting Town Tour. The old town owes much of its red brick charm to the surrounding heavy red clay and was most attractive. Virginia 'is' Thomas Jefferson and we were really impressed by the splendid University, its campus and gardens, all of which he personally designed.

Next day, off to his home at Monticello - little mountain, again totally designed by him. We were there by 8.30 am, in the sunshine and once more fascinated by the innovative house and its gardens (and stories of the slaves lives).

The week unfolded rapidly as we enjoyed copious variations on fried chicken and its accompaniments, interspersed with dancing in an old Virginian tavern, museums and the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, with the trees almost into the "Fall".

We spent an interesting day in Richmond and learned all about the Civil War at the museum and later enjoyed yet more gardens in the Italian and Japanese style.

On our final day we drove to Montpelier House, the home of James Madison (Father of the Constitution). This elegant house was surrounded by beautiful grounds and gardens and even boasted its own racecourse courtesy of its later owners, the Dupont family

Our farewell dinner was just as hospitable as our welcome picnic / BBQ. We were entertained by a lovely local choir, which made our own farewell songs appear slightly unrehearsed, which they were ! However, our efforts were generously appreciated by our tolerant hosts. We had tears in our eyes when we left our new and wonderful friends.



Week 2

Our poor hosts - we arrived at 9.30 am. They certainly had an early start but their welcome was so warm. Thankfully, we mostly managed a restful day and were able to enjoy an enormous and delicious 'pot luck' supper in the evening.

Charlotte was such a contrast to Charlottesville. Heavy traffic, wide roads, huge trucks (lorries to you and I) and several skyscrapers in this busy banking city. We were fortunate to see the salvaged remains of the city's past - the Fourth Ward, with its painted wooden houses, as in Virginia, straight out of the old 'Westerns'. We took the trolley bus (preserved, but on wheels) to the centre and were shown vast churches and theatres within shopping malls - all outward signs of a thriving and busy economy.

We all enjoyed much 'Retail Therapy' - some to an amazing extent ! The outlets were vast and almost overwhelming.

We were staying in the heart of 'Civil War' territory and spent an enthralling day watching a battle re-enactment and touring the 'camp' and getting a real feel for the atmosphere of those times. The nearby doctors house, used to film 'The Patriot' and others, was well worth a visit and in the grounds were the old settlers homes and workshops and even a school. During all this time we kept up our regular intake of Fried Chicken !

Sunday really was a 'church day'. We attended a variety of different churches packed with worshippers both young and old. We were impressed by the great faith in God that was so outgoing.

On a wet and misty day we were cheered by the local vinery visit and its warming products, followed by great hospitality, but sadly poor visibility, at the other end of the Blue Ridge mountains. The group never flagged, but went on shopping to the end, and even produced the farewell songs once more with vigour, at the farewell dinner.

Did we have a good time ? **SIMPLY GREAT !**

I hope we understand and appreciate the fears and the tragedy of '9/11' more. Theirs is a short history compared to ours, but the generous hearted Americans that we met were proud and strong with hope for a peaceful future. It was a privilege to know and become friends with them all.

To Liz Haynes our E.D. who, with Jennie, set up and made this visit run so smoothly and happily - an ENORMOUS 'Thank You' from us all, not forgetting the patient Paul for booking all the complicated travel for us.

Sara Cox