

Chelmsford & District NT Supporter Group



in support of **National
Trust**

Autumn 2018

No 87

Newsletter

Chairman's Message

What amazing weather we have been blessed with this summer, although our gardens have suffered, together with some of us! I'm sure I wasn't the only one who found the heat a trifle tiring!

All our outings have been successful & it was reassuring to find that our own gardens were not the only ones suffering from the lack of rain! As I write we only have the outing to Wimpole to complete and I'm hoping to find some of the trees which our group has provided over the years.

At this point I would like to thank Paul Chaplin for all the work both he and Janet put into planning our trips and the holiday. Our President David Simmonds and his wife Winifred know the Tiverton area well and were able to be supportive on the holiday; we packed so much in that some of us needed a week to recover!

The Chairman's Meeting will take place this Autumn at Sutton Hoo where a lot of work is being undertaken in readiness for next summer and we hope to include an outing to see the improvements, some of which we have helped to fund. It will be interesting to see the differences our new Director General Hilary McGrady is making as, unlike her two predecessors, she has worked for the Trust for 12 years before her appointment and she has promised to have a "listening ear". Our Regional Director Paul Forecast will be leading this event and I will hope to give you an up-date. Our thanks must go to David for arranging the President's Event at Paycocke's in May which those attending very much enjoyed.

As a Supporter Group we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the Committee for all the work they do through the year to make sure our plans run smoothly and also to Keith Otter for watching over our home page on the computer, Thelma and Olive who are busily knitting for our stall at the Christmas Market in the Cathedral, together with Laurie who is making chutneys and marmalade for the same stall. PLEASE will you put the date in your diary, Saturday 1st December 10.00 am – 3.00pm and support their hard work?

As I mentioned at the AGM I will be **standing down** as Chairman in March. Like most of the Committee I am well outside my length of time in the Office and we need new Committee members with fresh ideas to continue to keep our group thriving and lively. If you feel you might be able to join the group please consider a trial year. Your NT Group needs you!
Best wishes,

Jackie

Supporter Group Holiday, 3rd to 7th September 2018 – based in Tiverton Devon.

Monday 3rd Sept. The heavy early morning mist showed that autumn is just around the corner, but it had cleared by the time forty of us had assembled outside the Cramphorn Theatre for the start of our summer holiday. Sadly two members had had to cancel at the last minute due to health problems, while an even greater sadness was the knowledge that one of our members had died earlier in the year. All were thought about and much missed.

Our Kings coach arrived in good time and we set off promptly at 9am for the first stage of our long journey to Tiverton. We were pleased to see our driver was the unflappable Marc, whose skill at driving in reverse down seven foot wide country lanes is legendary! All went well until after our second comfort stop at Fleet when we encountered a stop-start crawl due to a collision between two lorries. We could only hope that the driver of the second lorry was not badly injured as the state of his windscreen suggested.

Late arriving at Montacute House, a real 'showing off' piece of Elizabethan architecture. By now the weather had turned into a gloriously sunny, hot summer day, and it seemed more sensible to concentrate on the varied gardens, rather than visiting the house. The portrait gallery alone is 52.5m (172 feet) long, there was no time to appreciate everything in what was now reduced to a two hour visit.

Leaving Montacute promptly at 5pm, the hour's journey to our hotel at Tiverton was completed without incident. On arrival we were treated to tea and coffee in the lounge while our cases were taken up to our rooms. A very welcome arrangement as the hotel had no lift!

Tuesday 4th Not too early a start for our first visit of the day. At 9.45am we were all aboard the coach, ready for the fifteen minute drive to Knightshayes. An hour later, after a very scenic journey, we arrived at Knightshayes to be greeted by a very cheerful member of staff who assured us that no-one can find them. The advice is to ditch the sat-nav and do it the old fashioned way by following the road signs. The weather being, if anything, more summer-like than yesterday's, the gardens seemed a more attractive proposition for our now-shortened visit to the house. The property itself is Victorian, but parts were designed in a Medieval style. It was owned by the Heathcoat Amory family. It was built for the owner of a lace-making factory, who had a reputation of being a benevolent employer, providing homes and many benefits for the welfare of his workers. Later generations of the family turned to politics and many people well remember a member of the Heathcoat Amory family as a post-war Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Leaving Knightshayes, we journeyed on to Killerton House and gardens. A surprising link with Chelmsford is that the house was designed by John Johnson, the architect of the Shire Hall. Although not a top-flight architect it may be that he had a friend in Devon who recommended him to Sir Thomas Acland, who only wanted a temporary home built. Sir Thomas planned to have a grand mansion built nearby but abandoned his plans after his heir was killed in a duel. Today Killerton is a comfortable family home, with a relaxed atmosphere.

Wednesday 5th A day of journeys through breath-takingly beautiful countryside. Our President, David Simmonds and Winifred his wife were with us. Winifred was born near Tiverton and she and David have spent a lot of time in the area so we had the pleasure of a running commentary from David on the scenes we were passing through. David pointed out a bridge which is said to have been the inspiration for the song 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'.

Although they did stay at a guest house overlooking the scene, Simon and Garfunkel deny it inspired their song, but it's a nice story.

Our first destination of the day was Dunster Castle, undoubtedly the most dramatic of the places on our itinerary. Owned by the Luttrell family for over six hundred years, the interior was converted into a lavish country home in Victorian times. Its ruined tower and Medieval gatehouse are reminders of its less peaceful past. On top of a steep hill it's a great place for those who enjoy panoramic views. The journey from Dunster to Arlington Court was quite amazing – the bright clear sunny day meant you could see the Bristol Channel with shipping and then Wales beyond. Another feature of the journey despite the narrow and at places very steep gradients we met oncoming traffic at the most convenient of places – real luck!

Arlington Court is the home to eleven generations of the Chichester family, distantly related to Sir Francis Chichester, the 'round the world' yachtsman. Sadly, the family died out with an unmarried daughter, Rosalie, who bequeathed the house and estate to the NT in 1949. Rosalie was a tireless traveller and collector and the stark-looking home houses an incredible collection of items. Teaspoons, sea shells, textiles, it seems that anything Rosalie could pay for and pack in her suitcase came home with her. There is another Essex connection. In one display cabinet is a tiny cross, made from a fragment of a Zeppelin, shot down over Essex in 1916 with a note to say 'sold in aid of the LNER War Seal Foundation'*

Thursday 6th The only day when the weather let us down, with a series of intermittent showers, not long lasting, but some quite heavy. Our latest start time, as our morning destination, Powderham Castle, does not open until 10am. Not strictly speaking a castle, but a fortified house, Powderham Castle is home to the 28th generation of the Courtenay family! Of course, this is not by direct descent, the succession has moved sideways a couple of times. Visitors are not allowed to go around the house unaccompanied, but have to be in a party with a guide.

The house has many impressive historical features, but an amazing and an amusing one is the large number of secret doors to be found in it. One room alone has seven! Our guide, a man with a light-hearted approach to history, took great delight in revealing the hidden openings. He also had a nice line in jokes and funny stories, explaining that the family had once made a fortune from whaling, he described the whale meat being transported to London by 'whaleway'! The home includes a small chapel, with elaborately carved pew-ends. A very moving feature is the small brass plaques on one wall, commemorating three estate workers, a game-keeper and two footmen, who were killed in the first World War.

Leaving Powderham, we made the half hour journey to Exeter for an afternoon of free time. The weather was not kind and, apart from its cathedral, which is of overwhelming magnificence and grandeur, a purely personal view is that Exeter has nothing to recommend it. Moving swiftly on, we returned to our hotel and packed all but a few essentials, ready for our cases to be collected before tomorrow's breakfast.

Friday 7th After a hearty breakfast the party boarded the coach for the final visit of the holiday – Barrington Court. This was the NTs first major purchase of a large house and estate and looked like being the last. The property was in need of such extensive repair and restoration that it seemed the cost would cripple the organisation. Step forward the jaw-droppingly wealthy Colonel Lyle of Tate and Lyle sugar. His vision of restoration, carried out between 1920 – 25 has given us the home and grounds we see today. Sadly, the house is now devoid of

contents, everything having been sold off a part of the settlement of what must have been a very messy and complicated divorce case. However, Colonel Lyle had a passion for collecting top quality panelling from abandoned county houses, all of which he installed at Barrington as part of the restoration. There is even a magnificent staircase, salvaged by the good Colonel from a Scottish Castle (don't ask!).

Three hours was all too short a time in which to explore this splendid house and the glorious gardens, the layout of which was planned in consultation with Gertrude Jekyll. The weather having returned to warm and sunny it was a real wrench but we had to admit our holiday was over and board our coach for the final stage of our homeward journey. Happily, it was a journey without incidents and by 6:30pm we were in Chelmsford.

Thanks were given to Paul and Janet for a perfect programme, intricate itinerary and their recce. Also of course to Marc our driver who can get a coach through the eye of a needle!

Report by Sherley Deering

*The War Seal Foundation's objective was to erect, equip and maintain self-contained residential flats for injured soldiers returning from war and their families, where they could receive medical care; it is understood that The War Seal Foundation later became The Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation.

IN RECOGNITION OF MARC'S GREAT SERVICES AND FRIENDSHIP.

There was a young driver from kings
Who told us some wonderful things?
His jokes and his smiles
Made light of the miles
Though only his mirrors had wings.

Kings Coaches provided a driver,
A shame that he turned out a skiver
At each stop we made
He sat in the shade
And read books on Lady Godiva.

By Laurie Boyall and others

ADVANCED NOTICE

NEXT YEAR THE HOLIDAY WILL BE CENTRED ON YORK

From Monday 9th to Friday 13th September 2019

More information in the Spring Newsletter

C & D NT SUPPORTER GROUP VISITS, SUMMER 2018

Saturday, 5th May 2018 - Outing to Kentwell Hall

We couldn't have asked for better weather for our first outing of 2018. Our short journey to Kentwell Hall was done in glorious sunshine and it stayed that way for the whole visit. The Hall was having one of their 'themed' days which, on this occasion, was Elizabethan. Volunteers in period costume greeted us with a cheerful 'Good day' and maintained the authenticity by continuing conversations in the English of the Elizabethan period. There was plenty to do in the grounds: feed the huge shoals of fish in the moat using food purchased from the



shop; watch the blacksmith at work in the forge, or see how candles were made, but many were relieved to enjoy the cool of the Hall itself. Cooks were busy in the kitchen preparing lunch using just the ingredients and utensils that would have been available in Elizabethan times. You could also try writing with a quill or chat with the present owner's family in the Great Hall. On the down side, we saw the havoc caused by the leaking roof during the winter storms; the whole library area was closed off while repairs were being carried out.

Activities continued into the afternoon, culminating in the raising of the maypole and the crowning of the May Queen, selected from a group of about twenty girls, all wearing long white dresses. Following tradition, she was abducted by an evil intruder, 'Jack-in-the-Green,' before being re-captured by the angry crowd who then turned on Jack. Music was provided by a small group playing period instruments, who then accompanied the communal dancing. As we made our way back to the coach for the journey home, spirits were high. We'd got off to a good start!

Saturday, 9th June, 2018

Outing to Chiltern Open Air Museum (COAM) and Ascott House

This was a popular and over-subscribed trip with, once again, Tim being our driver for the day. The sky was overcast on the non-stop ride but the sun started to break through as we arrived at the COAM, located near Amersham. We had a longish walk from reception down to the barn where we were served coffee/tea with a nice pastry. It was now warm enough to sit



outside. There was a variety of buildings to look at in the immediate vicinity, including a thatched cottage, an RAF Nissen Hut, a 1940s prefab and a mission chapel. Further exploration took us to a Victorian farm, an Iron Age house and the High Wycombe Toll house, to name a few. There were also the attractive gardens by

the site office near the entrance, laid out by Gertrude Jekyll. The large site meant that members were somewhat spread out on returning to the coach, which then left for the next destination, Ascott House.

This was a former hunting lodge dating from the 16th C which was donated to the National Trust in 1949 by Anthony de Rothschild, together with its collection of paintings – many being of horses, with George Stubbs featuring prominently – and the large ceramic collection, much of which was oriental. We had timed entries so some had a quick look at the gardens, particularly the topiary section, before going in. Photography, with or without flash, was not allowed in the house, but the grounds were very photogenic, including the lily pond.



Wednesday, 12th July - Outing to Lamport and Kelmarsh Halls

This was a mid-week outing, which initially was over-subscribed, but a few had pulled out at the last-minute meaning that the coach was not completely full. We set off with our driver, Tim, to Northamptonshire, via the M11/A14, with a comfort stop at Cambridge services. It

was cool and overcast but the sun broke through later and stayed with us for the rest of the day. Neither of the properties were NT, and each was now administered by private trusts.

We were welcomed at Lamport by a volunteer and led round to the entrance where we were divided into two groups for the tours. Both guides were interesting and knowledgeable, but there was a lot to take in. The present house dates from 1655 and owes its existence to the Ishams, who were one of Northamptonshire's wealthiest families. They were keen royalists but managed to survive the ravages of the Civil War.



The line of succeeding Baronetcies was complex and included some notable eccentrics, such as Sir Charles Isham, 10th Baronet, who had bought the oldest garden gnome in the world and which was on show in a glass case! The 12th Baronet, Sir Gyles Isham, had to restore the house after it been used – or rather mis-used – by billeted soldiers during World War II. Apparently, the hall had been offered to the National Trust but they had declined the offer because of the extensive restoration work that would have been needed.

Tim had to negotiate a very narrow entrance to our next property, Kelmarsh Hall. A volunteer met us and explained that we were to be divided into FIVE groups, two of which went straight to the tea room for a late lunch. The house had been started in 1618 by William Hanbury, but the present building was developed in 1722, using the designer James Gibbs to establish its Palladian style. Unlike Lamport, Kelmarsh was not handed down through an inherited lineage but had acquired a series of owners, being used extensively as a hunting lodge, as was evident in the many horsey paintings. As we left for home we saw in the distance the herd of the distinctive Kelmarsh cattle.



Saturday, 11th August - Outing to Sissinghurst and Great Dixter



This was a hassle-free trip with no delay at the Dartford Crossing but our driver, Tim, had to be very careful negotiating the last half-mile down the narrow lanes that led to Sissinghurst. The NT volunteer who welcomed us gave us our maps and small tokens for any re-entry we wanted to make. She admitted that, because of the long summer heatwave and the recent heavy rainstorms, the gardens were not looking at their best. Regrettably, we had to agree but we made the most of it. Some brave souls even managed the climb up to the top of the towers! An interesting 'first' for myself and Jackie was that the library was open and we were able to see where Vita Sackville-West did most of her work. Several in the party had booked to have lunch in the restaurant, with its stunning views over the Kent countryside, but there was a bit of time left to go back into the gardens before returning to the coach.

Great Dixter gardens were only a twenty-minute drive away and the coach dropped us near a barn on the property where a film was showing. This time the house was open as well as the gardens and it was a fascinating experience to wander round. The original structure was

Elizabethan and one of the guides was even able to point out some Tudor graffiti that was just visible on an overhead beam with the aid of a torch. Photography was not permitted, even without flash, but I was able to get a nice shot of the sunken garden through an open top floor window. The gardens had clearly been looked after lovingly, revealing a riot of colour wherever we wandered. Particularly impressive was the long border which we walked along before working our way round to the tea rooms for a welcome cuppa. A few of the members had purchased plants to take home. They seemed to have survived the journey back to Chelmsford!



Outing reports by Al Arnot

OUTINGS STILL TO COME

Saturday 13th October

In the Spring Newsletter this was advertised as: ‘Coach outing to **Wimpole Hall Estate** - Hall, gardens, stable block and farm’. After a recce this outing now includes **Mountfichet Castle, Norman Village & Toy Museum** and then we visit **Wimpole Estate** in the afternoon.

Please ring Paul if you wish to go as there may be a vacancy.

Wednesday 28th November

Christmas Mail – a visit to the Postal Museum London – a tour of the Christmas Lights in Oxford Street and a fish & chip supper. If you wish to join us please complete the application form attached to the end of this newsletter.

We will be present at
**Chelmsford Cathedral Christmas
Market on
Saturday 1st December 2018
again with four tables
Please come and support the
event**

**NOTICE of AGM
Wednesday 6th March 2018
At 7:45pm**

**Agenda and details will be in the Spring
Newsletter**

**Any nominations or items please send to
our secretary:**

**Pat Tate
1 Kingston Crescent
Chelmsford, CM2 6DL
01245 250654**

**We would be delighted to hear
from you to join the committee**

Straight from the Horse's Mouth

But you can never be certain of getting the true facts, even when they seem to come from an utterly reliable source.

"Joe, what's wrong? You're as white as a sheet."

"I've just had a terrible shock."

"Tell me about it."

"You wouldn't believe me."

"Try me."

"Well, you know the horse we've just bought, for giving visitors open carriage rides round the grounds of Beechlea Hall."

"Summer Gold? Yes, what about him?"

"I was in the stable just now and I heard a voice say 'This is a come-down'. I looked all around, even went up to the hay loft, but there was definitely no-one in the stable. Then I heard the voice again, 'never thought I'd be reduced to this'. I thought there must be some-one outside, so I went out in the stable yard and searched everywhere but couldn't find any sign of anybody, so I went back into Summer Gold's stable.

'It seems I've started to hear voices – unless, of course, you are able to talk' I said, jokingly, to the horse."

'Oh yes, I'm able to talk and I'm fed-up' said Summer Gold. 'Do you realise I was once a highly acclaimed race horse? I mingled with the cream of the aristocracy and, yes, even royalty. Now I'm reduced to dragging cart-loads of common people round the grounds of a once-lordly estate. And to think that, five years ago to-day, I won the Derby.'"

"Joe, that's a load of rubbish."

"See, I knew you wouldn't believe me."

"Well of course not. I happen to know he only came second!"

By Shirley Deering

AUTUMN, WINTER & SPRING MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY 19th SEPTEMBER 7:45pm

'Markets, Mildmay & Marconi'. A talk by Yvonne Lawrence

In an hour Yvonne covered the history of Chelmsford, the impact the Mildmay dynasty had on Chelmsford and the early days of the Marconi Company. Her excellent illustrated talk also included video clips and sound recordings.

WEDNESDAY 17th OCTOBER 7:45pm

'Chelmsford Suffragettes' – *Chelmsford had its own Suffragettes, supporters and nationally known visitors to the town.* A talk by Stephen Norris

Stephen has a wealth of knowledge of Suffragists and Suffragettes, both local folk and national figures who visited Chelmsford. An enthralling, illustrated talk.

WEDNESDAY 14th NOVEMBER 7:45p

'Essex Country Houses' Talk by Ben Cowell

Ben is the Director General of the Historic Houses Association and will be speaking about his work, particularly as it affects Essex and the properties here. He has great communication skills as some of you will remember when he spoke on the work of the N.T. in this region.

WEDNESDAY 12th DECEMBER 7:45pm

'Henry VIII and his six Wives'. Talk by Tony Strange.

It is reported that Tony dresses up for the talk and enjoys acting! It promises to be a very enjoyable evening.

WEDNESDAY 9th JANUARY 7:45pm

'From Crossbow to CrossRail – Archaeology of a major transport project'

The talk by Marit Leenstra from The Museum of London Archaeology will reveal how excavating for CrossRail led to exciting new discoveries about the lives of the earliest Londoners

WEDNESDAY 6th FEBRUARY 7:45pm

'History of Spoken English'. Talk by Charlie Haydock

Charlie has a reputation for being an entertaining and informative speaker. This is one of those talks you should not miss.

WEDNESDAY 6th MARCH 7:45pm

AGM followed by a presentation from the Hatfield Forest Team to give us some exciting updates.

WEDNESDAY 10th APRIL 7:45pm

'My Journey as a Designer' - talk by Amanda Southerland fashion designer

Amanda's presentation of her creative journey is a fun packed informative and inspirational talk as she takes us through her life of design.

Data Protection Act 2018.

Chelmsford & District NT Supporter Group will hold essential details (name, address, telephone number and e-mail) for newsletter distribution, outings and membership. ***No information is transmitted to any third party.*** If you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter and Outings information please let Colin Jay know by letter or email.

To pick up on the latest situation on our evening meeting or outings please visit our website at

www.chelmsfordntgroup.org.uk

Large print copies of the Newsletter are available by contacting Paul Chaplin at 11 Mace Walk, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2GE. Tel: 01245 260113.

Chelmsford & District National Trust Centre - to prosper the work of National Trust which is a registered charity, number 205846

The Christmas Post

Chelmsford & District NT Supporter Group

Wednesday 28 November 2018



Today we explore a lesser-known London district with a very important place in the history of our nation. We will be told the story of posting a letter from earliest times to the coming of the GPO, visit the brand new Postal Museum and take a ride on the Mail Rail beneath the streets of London. We will see London dressed for Christmas – beautifully illuminated buildings old and new, classical and challenging. Floodlit London is stunning.

We arrive in London to meet our Blue Badge Guide with free time to buy lunch in Exmouth Market. There are a variety of food stalls as well as traditional pubs and cafes. Once we are suitably refreshed we visit the nearby state of the art Postal Museum where five zones lead the visitor through five centuries of world-class curiosities. From the original sculpture of Queen Elizabeth II used to produce the iconic image replicated on 220 billion stamps to a rather quirky five-wheeled Victorian post man's bicycle and a priceless sheet of Penny Blacks.

We enjoy a 20 minute tootle on Mail Rail—the 100 year old Post Office railway with miniature trains, stopping at original station platforms where impressive displays show how the Post Office Pneumatic Railway once whizzed four million letters a day beneath the streets of London.

Watch the iconic ***Night Mail*** film with by WH Auden and music by Benjamin Britten and then step into a replica Travelling Post Office and try your hand at sorting the mail just like in the film.

As dark falls we begin our special Christmas Post tour combines telling the story of posting a letter from Roman times to the coming of the GPO with the lights and sights of Christmas London. We begin our explorations as the commuters make their way home. The rush hour is a joy to watch when you're not struggling in it!

Seeking out visible reminders of our postal history from the coffee houses of Samuel Pepys' day to the old inns where scarlet clad, blunderbuss wielding guards announced their departure with a blast of their mail horns. We'll see the Christmas lights in the shopping streets but remember it's not just about Oxford Street any more as many London buildings and bridges are now beautifully illuminated at night. We finish off with a one course Fish & Chip supper with a hot drink, ready to head home on emptier roads at 7pm.

Cost £59.75 per head which includes coach, driver's tip, Blue Badge Guide (including his/her tip), entrance fee to the Postal Museum and supper.



**Chelmsford & District NT Supporter Group
Winter Outing Wednesday 28th November booking Form**

Your Name _____ Phone Number _____

My travelling companion's name is: _____

Address _____

Any dietary requirements: _____

I enclose Cheque/cash for £ _____ for _____ persons.

Please send sae with cheque (or cash by hand only) for £59.75 per person (non members £61.25) made payable to 'Chelmsford NT Supporter Group' and send to Paul Chaplin, 11 Mace Walk, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 2GE by Wednesday 14th November with this booking form.

Confirmation and further details will be sent nearer the time.

Numbers are limited to a 53 seat coach – confirmation issued on a first come basis. If there are less than 35 applications the trip will be cancelled.