

Chelmsford & District NT Supporter Group



in support of **National
Trust**

Autumn 2024

No 99

Newsletter

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Dates for your diary:

2024

Wednesday 9th October – Evening meeting

Monday 21th October – Coach outing

Wednesday 13th November – Evening meeting

Saturday 7nd December – Chelmsford Cathedral Christmas Market

Wednesday 11th December – Evening meeting

2025

Wednesday 8th January – Evening meeting

Wednesday 12th February – Evening meeting

Wednesday 12th March – AGM and Evening meeting

Wednesday 9th April – Evening meeting

See details on page 2

Chelmsford Cathedral Christmas Market on

Saturday 7th December 2024

with two tables

Please come and support the event

Mostly knitted goods

Keep an eye on our website!

Programme from October 2024 to April 2025

2024

WEDNESDAY 9th OCTOBER 7:45pm

Chelmsford in WW2

Talk by Tony Tuckwell

We welcome Tony back again for another of his excellent lectures.

MONDAY 21st OCTOBER

Outing to River & Rowing Museum in Henley -on-Thames and Basildon Park near Reading

Please contact Paul on 01245 260113 to see if there are any spaces available.

WEDNESDAY 13th NOVEMBER 7:45pm

Stained Glass Windows Rosemary Rutherford

Talk by Catherine Pearson

Catherine's account of the life and work of Rosemary Rutherford will whet members appetite for a visit to Broomfield Parish Church.

SATURDAY 7th DECEMBER

C&D NT SG Stall at the Cathedral Christmas Market. 10am to 2:30pm

WEDNESDAY 11th DECEMBER 7:45pm

Who put Bad in Baddow and What Made it Great?

Talk by Lawrence & Helen Gray

The Grays lived abroad for many years and have now settled back in the UK in Great Baddow and they have been uncovering its past.

2025

WEDNESDAY 8th JANUARY 2023 7:45pm

The Victorian Workhouse

Talk by Richard Pusey

In 2020 he gave us an excellent talk on the life of IK Brunel as a ship builder.

WEDNESDAY 12th FEBRUARY 7:45pm

Show Must Go On

Talk by Yvonne Lawrence

We are delighted to welcome back Yvonne who in April 2023 gave a talk on the History of Chelmsford High Street. On this occasion her talk is on the early theatres and cinemas in Chelmsford

WEDNESDAY 12th MARCH 7:45pm

AGM and '50 Not Out' – The work of the NT over the last 50years and going forward by *Paul Forecast the Regional Director.*

WEDNESDAY 9th APRIL 7:45pm

J A Baker

Talk by David Simmonds

See page 4 for more details

The Venue for our meetings from now on will be at Trinity Methodist Church, 46, Rainsford Road, CM1 2XB (opposite the County Hotel). The Meetings starts at the usual time of 7.45pm

A plea from Membership Secretary

Membership fees for the year 2025 (next year) will usually be made by one of the following three methods.

(a) by Cheque - (b) by Standing Order - (c) by Bank Transfer.

My plea is to those members who at present pay by cheque. Cheques are processed at the Bank usually by using a paying in machine, which is fine providing the cheques are clearly written. If they are not, the machine rejects them all and I have to seek a Bank Employee to get them processed. This is time consuming and rather tedious for me.

I would strongly recommend you to use a Standing Order or alternatively use the Bank Transfer method.

Only use Cheques if you are unable to use these other methods

I can supply the necessary details for Standing Orders and the Bank Transfer details will appear in the Spring Newsletter. I would appreciate your cooperation on this issue.

Chairman's Report – Chairman@chelmsfordNTgroup.co.uk

Welcome to Members, new Members and Prospective Members reading this Newsletter. Many activities since the last newsletter are reported further on in this Newsletter and thanks to all contributors and the Committee. Please see the C&D NT SG website for further information and thanks to webmaster Keith Otter for all his input.

An enjoyable variety of day trips by coach including to date Abingdon & Kelmscott Manor, St Mary's Bramber, Elton Hall & Peterborough and Mannington Hall in Norfolk. To come: The River & Rowing Museum at Henley-on Thames and Basildon Park near Reading see reports in this newsletter. Thanks to Shirley Dearing, Ann Notman and Hanna Gillet for their comprehensive reports. Paul and I did the recces which helped with detailed planning. Thanks to Tim of Kings Coaches for his careful driving.

Thanks to Jackie Arnot for the arrangements for the Summer Chelmsford Cathedral Fair on the 1st July. Many thanks to Olive and Thelma for the many knitted contributions and Beryl for books and other items also the committee members manning the tables. This resulted in raising £165 for the NT.

Thanks to Paul Chaplin for his research, arrangements and scheduling for a very interesting and informative week in Liverpool enjoyed by 40 members. Thanks to Marc of Kings Coaches for his skilful driving. See report on pages 13 to 18. Maurice Austin continues to oversee and monitor funds to be distributed to NT properties in the East of England as decided by the committee from requests from the wish list. Thank-you letters from recipient properties will be available to view at meetings.

Thanks to the programme subcommittee who have arranged as usual an interesting series of autumn and spring evening meetings. David Simmonds provides a range of illustrated talks and all proceeds go to the NT. Please contact him (djsimmonds@aol.com) if you wish to book him as a speaker.

I wish you all good health and enjoyment in all you do including C&D NT SG activities and thank all members for their support of our activities. *Chris Bellamy - Chairman*

J A Baker – an extraordinary Chelmsford Writer

Our City is associated with many famous people, with one of the lesser known being the author J A Baker. He lived almost his entire life in Chelmsford from his birth in 1926 to his death in 1987. Baker is internationally renowned for *The Peregrine*, published in 1967, described by one critic as *setting the gold standard for nature writing*. Interest in his life and works has increased over the years, with a Blue Plaque placed at 44 Stansted Close, where he wrote *The Peregrine*. In addition, there is an exhibition at Chelmsford Museum, Oaklands Park, from 23 March to 3 November this year - see Chelmsford City Council press release at <https://citylife.chelmsford.gov.uk/2023/11/23/chelmsford-museum-exhibition-to-explore-legacy-of-legendary-local-nature-writer/>

I have a great interest in Baker and, as well as leading walks in *Baker Country* and giving talks, I run a website about him at <https://jabaker.co.uk/> I am very much looking forward to talking about J A Baker at our 9th April meeting, especially as he spent much time birdwatching around the National Trust properties at Danbury and Little Baddow. But beforehand, make sure that you visit the exhibition!

David Simmonds

Reports of evening meetings from February to April 2024

Wednesday 14th February 2024

On the evening of 14th February members enjoyed another “home grown” presentation, this time given by Members Thelma Wilson and Olive Baldwin. Well-known for their breath-taking handicraft skills, on this occasion the two members demonstrated another skill as they gave an illustrated talk on Ellen Willmott and Warley Place.

Thelma led the first half of the evening, with a talk on the life of Ellen Willmott. A famous lady gardener, she is often spoken of in the same category as Gertrude Jekyll, but the two are not really comparable, Gertrude being more of a writer while Ellen’s focus was on developing new plant species.

Ellen was of humble origin, her grandfather had kept a chemists’ shop, a business taken over by her father. He made shrewd investments and became a wealthy man and was able to buy the large property, Warley Place where Ellen, the eldest of three daughters, grew up. Born in 1858, by 1905 Ellen had inherited a considerable fortune from her parents and this, combined with legacies from other relatives and friends, made her a very wealthy woman. She bought other properties, including one in Italy, and both she and Warley Place had become famous in the world of gardening.

At Warley Place Ellen grew many different kinds of plants, for instance, she had an alpine garden, and had many very expensive ways of developing them. She had heated greenhouses, with their own boiler house, heated frames and irrigation channels. Popular legend said she employed a hundred gardeners to help her, probably not true, but she may well have had up to fifty. Sadly, Ellen had no head for figures and, by the time of her sudden death in 1934, was in great financial difficulty.



Olive then took over the second half of the evening, to tell us what happened to Warley Place and the gardens. Sadly, the house did not survive, but plans by a property developer to purchase the land were not accepted and WWII put a stop to such ideas. After the war Warley Place found itself in a green belt area, therefore safe from being built on, but in a woeful state of dereliction. In 1970 Essex Wildlife Trust obtained a 99year lease of the grounds and today it is a thriving centre of nature conservation, run by many volunteers and welcoming many visitors. Surely Ellen Willmott would approve!

Wednesday 13th March 2024

The meeting of 13th March began with the AGM, attended by 55 members.

Chairman, Chris Bellamy, introduced the members of the committee, and thanked each of them for the role they play. Special thanks were also given to three members of the group who play an outstanding part in contributing to our fund-raising effort at the Christmas Market – Thelma Wilson and Olive Baldwin for their knitted novelties, and Laurie Boyal for his preserves and preserves. Individual Officer's gave their reports, which were all positive and optimistic. This included an update from Paul Chaplin, Programme Secretary, on the response to outings and holiday bookings, which he said had been encouraging.

The AGM closed at 8.25pm.

Chris Bellamy then introduced Liz Hartly and Kay Bright, who had come to talk about the life and work of Bryan Saunders, a little-known local craftsman in wood carving.

Born in Coggeshall in 1893, Bryan Saunders was apprenticed to a local wood carver at the age of 14. His first job was to repair the figurehead of a ship anchored off the coast of Spain. To undertake this, he had to be suspended up-side-down in a sling! By the age of 21 he had developed varicose veins, which he believed to be a result of working with machinery. He therefore vowed he would never use wood-turning lathes again but would carry out all his carving using only hand tools. At least this condition made him unfit for military service, though he tried to enlist in both World Wars.



Most of his commissions were for church work, such as pew ends, Choir stalls and pulpits. He never signed his work or incorporated a specific emblem by which he could be recognised, therefore it is impossible to identify his work visually. Fortunately, he was a man who kept everything! After his death in 1973 his daughter found 21 boxes of paperwork relating to his career. It will take years of hard work to sort and catalogue everything, which only started in 2021. She bequeathed his tools to the Grange Barn in Coggeshall, where they are now on display. Liz and Kay brought along a selection of the tools, which members could handle as an inducement to visit Grange Barn, and learn about this remarkable craftsman.

Wednesday 10th April 2024

On the evening of the 10th April members gathered for the final meeting of the 2023-24 winter programme. The invited speaker, Ken Crowe, gave a detailed and well researched talk on a little-known facet of the story of the Dissolution of the Monasteries – what happened to all the fittings and furnishings of the monastic homes.



Many of the English monasteries were very wealthy, they owned farms and flour mills which were rented to tenant farmers and millers, from this and other income they received substantial financial support. They were required to pay a tenth of this income to the Pope in Rome. Having broken with Rome and declared himself head of the Church of England, it was obvious to Henry VIII that this income tax was now payable to him. Hence he set about the huge and complex task of assessing the monetary value of every religious house in England. Ken explained that the dissolution of the Monasteries actually had two phases. The first took place in 1535 to 36 and covered the smaller monasteries and priories, those thought to be worth less than £200. The larger monasteries were tackled later and it was not until 1540 that every religious house had been suppressed.

King Henry appointed Royal Commissioners, who were responsible for seeing that a detailed inventory was made of everything in each building, and the composition of the building itself. So, everything was listed, from the bells to teaspoons, from the lead on the roof to the flagstones on the kitchen floor and everything given a value. Everyday items were sold at auction and many items made of precious metals were melted down. Proceeds from sales went to the King's coffers, though if there were any items he particularly liked the look of he would keep them to put in one of his palaces.

Sadly, we don't know what happened to all the displaced monks, but Ken assured us that the senior priors and canons were given a lump sum or annual pension, or offered the living of a parish church. So perhaps King Henry wasn't all bad!

All reports by Shirley Deering

Summer Outing Reports

ABINGDON and KELMSCOTT MANOR 24th April

The weather gods listened to our pleas, the winds abated and the rain stopped in time for the first visit of the year by 40 members of C&D NT SG.

We were dropped off at the cricket club car park on the south side of the town of Abingdon. This meant a short walk over the bridge spanning River Thames, past historic houses, towards the Market Place, with about an hour of free time to stretch our legs. After a coffee at the Missing Bean Cafe, we wandered towards the Guildhall area of town. We were amused by a cafe, sadly closed, named Throwing Buns. A visit to the Tourist Information told us that this was a custom carried out on royal occasions and other important dates when members of the Town Council would throw buns from the roof of the County Hall to the crowds below. At King Charles's Coronation 5000 buns were thrown and eagerly caught to either be consumed on the spot or carefully baked dry and preserved as an heirloom. Too soon it was time to return over the bridge to our coach and on to Kelmscott Manor.



The drop off point at Kelmscott was again a short walk from the house but gave us a chance to soak up the tranquil atmosphere of the village, ideal country cottages and gardens before we walked through a gate into the Manor grounds where we were treated to refreshments and an introductory talk.

In 1871 William Morris wanted a country retreat for his family while maintaining the apartment "above the shop" in London. Together with Dante Gabriel Rossetti he took out a joint tenancy and moved into the old farm house. A wrap around garden gave views of the garden and surrounding countryside from all the windows. You could see how this inspired some of Morris's designs. The walled garden was laid out in "rooms" with lawns and full flower beds, an orchard, a croquet lawn and a further meadow with cowslips and blue bells, stretching down to the water called Radcot Cut.

In accordance with Morris's ethos that "one should have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful", the rooms were simply furnished. There were comfortable armchairs, beds with drapes, decorative tiles around the fire place and patterned plates and jugs. William was interested in Persian art and I particularly liked two pierced metal incense burners in the form of peacocks. The previous owners of the Manor left four seventeenth century Dutch tapestries, sadly in poor condition, badly faded, worn and torn. William loved them and they inspired him to learn the technique himself.

In 2021 Kelmscott was awarded a grant of £4 million, some was spent on refurbishing Jane's bedroom. A master craftsman was found who could hand block printed wallpaper as Morris & Co would have done and recreated the pomegranate wallpaper with great skill, which has been hung in Jane's bedroom.

The grant also came in useful when a length of panelling found in a barn turned out to be the over mantle for the family sitting room. Removing many layers of paint revealed a dark green colour which William had mixed in 1882, and which in correspondence he described as "restful to the eye". This Brunswick Green colour has been reapplied to the woodwork in the house, and does look restful.

Work also involved conserving and opening up the attic/loft area in which Jenny and May played as children and William used as studio space.

William died in 1896 aged 62. In 1912 Jane Morris bought Kelmscott for £4000 but sadly died a year later while it was still being renovated. The house passed down to May, the second daughter, as the eldest daughter Jenny had epilepsy, so could not legally inherit the property.

William Morris called Kelmscott Manor his "Heaven on Earth". By the end of our visit, I think, we all felt the same way.

Report by Hanna Gillett.

ST MARYS BRAMBER on WEDNESDAY 19th JUNE

Our trip to St. Mary's Bramber and Brighton started with a cloudy and breezy morning, but the forecast was good for the seaside visit in the afternoon. All was going smoothly as planned till junction 5 on the M25 when our coach developed a puncture and had to stop to await rescue. Two hours later, new tyre fitted, we were desperate for a brief stop at Clacket Lane services for a comfort break and food. St Mary's Bramber were happy to reschedule our visit to the afternoon and a straw poll taken by Paul and Chris established that the Bramber visit had the majority vote. Brighton would have to wait for another day.



On arrival, one peep round the hedges and we knew that it had all been worth it. We passed lily ponds, topiary peacocks, hollyhocks growing between flagstones towards a picture perfect timbered medieval building just waiting to be explored.

The sun had come out and we had an initial talk in the front garden on the history of the very picturesque medieval house and grounds which dated back to 1470. The origins of St

Mary's go back to the days of the Knights Templar when 5 acres of land was gifted by the widow of Philip de Braose following his death. The building was originally constructed by William of Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester and founder of Magdalen College, Oxford as an inn for pilgrims on the way to the tomb of St Thomas of Canterbury.

It became a toll house for the toll bridge for travellers crossing the River Adur and onto the busy port of Steyning, a farm; a luxury family home in 1890s when the Hon. Algernon and Gwendolen Bourke moved in. Algernon was the founder of White's of St. James (a London Club) and Oscar Wilde modelled 2 characters in his comedy "The importance of being Ernest" on them. In 1907 the house was sold to socialite, Alfred Musgrave, the inspiration for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story, The Musgrave Ritual.

The Bourkes *sold* in 1913 and after a few more owners, the MoD billeted Canadian troops there during WW2. They left the house and grounds in a sorry state and tragically only 2 of the troop survived D Day. St. Mary's was rescued from demolition in 1946 by Miss Dorothy Ellis who worked hard to restore the house the best she could and lived there for thirty-five years.

In 1984 St Mary's was purchased by author and composer, Peter Thorogood, in collaboration with conservator, designer and landscape gardener, Roger Linton, both of whom embarked upon a long programme of restoration and still live in the house today. They were jointly awarded the MBE for services to conservation and the arts in 2006.

They have spent the last 40 years repairing and restoring the very fabric of the house,



scouring auction houses, antique shops, fairs and skips for furniture and fittings that reflect the St. Mary's story. Their joint talents and interests have contributed to creating an eclectic mix of decorative and functional items. Mellow panelling on the walls; simple but stylish furniture; display cabinets in every nook and cranny full of collectables such as, black basalt ware, Wedgwood China with a teapot with a sliding lid; exquisite beaded evening bags; ancient musical and scientific instruments; extensive Napoleonic memorabilia; dolls dressed in period costumes from Medieval to Edwardian times; dolls houses; 2 venerable and much loved teddy bears; and unusual fixtures, such as a "Parliamentary hinge" on the parlour door which, because it swung the door open with a wide gap from the door frame prevented assassins from hiding with ill intent. Another donated curio was a triple hinged set of shutters which allowed them to be opened partly or fully depending on the weather.

Our guide explained during our tour how the house had been altered over the years by various residents. There are tales of tunnels beneath the garden and a chapel under the hall, although access is not now possible. The rooms were very cosy and displayed artefacts collected over the centuries.

It was also rumoured that Elizabeth I would visit and so a room "fit for a Queen" was prepared. The panelling was stained and painted to depict trompe l'oeil arches and windows showing seascapes and landscapes. The Queen did not come, but the room is magnificent.

Our guide took us into the Octagonal Gothic Dining room displaying the Merrett collection of English costume dolls. She then surprised us by opening a door to reveal a stunning white music room, decorated in the Pre-Raphaelite style. With a sprung floor and two fireplaces it is just right for entertaining and dancing the night away. The French doors lead to a Secret Garden where flowers, topiary, water features and sculptures abound. Just magical.

We concluded the afternoon with a cream tea before visiting the gardens which covers an area of 5 acres, including the Jubilee rose garden, secret garden with original fruit wall, pineapple pits and landscaped water garden with its island and waterfall.

A charitable trust has been set up so St. Mary's future will be secured after Peter (97) and Roger (90) pass on to pastures new. They joined us for tea and were charming. The journey home was uneventful!

Report by Hanna Gillet and Ann Notman edited by Paul Chaplin

ELTON HALL, ELTON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE ON MONDAY 22 JULY 2024

On Monday 22 July we left Chelmsford under cloudy skies for our visit to Elton Hall. Our journey was uneventful and we arrived at Elton Hall mid-morning. After refreshments at the adjoining garden centre, we were split into three groups for our tour of the Grade I Baronial Hall.

The Proby family originally came from Chester. Sir Peter Proby was the first family member to acquire land at Elton in 1595. His grandson, Sir Thomas Proby, married a local heiress Frances Cotton, whereupon they acquired the site of the Hall and built a fine Restoration house in 1665, which incorporated the medieval chapel and gatehouse of the original Manor House. In the 18th century John Proby married an Irish heiress and became the Earl of Carysfort. His son was an inveterate builder and Gothicised the house, giving it dramatic appeal. Throughout the years successive generations have built additions and made alterations which can be seen in the interesting and attractive building it is today.

Many of the contents of the house were brought over from Glenart Castle, the Irish seat of the Carysforts in the 1920s. Ireland is the main residence of the family to this day. Paintings by famous artists including Gainsborough, Constable and Sir Joshua Reynolds are displayed throughout the house

The Chapel is part of the undercroft of the original medieval chapel. The vaulted ceiling remains as it was originally built and was consecrated as a Chapel after the war. It is still used for services and family christenings. We exited the Chapel through the Lower Octagon room with an 18th century painting of Dublin harbour by Turner. On a side table was an intricate watch stand made of beef bones by Russian prisoners of war.



We went through the Marble Hall up the main staircase to the Upper Octagon Room with wall cabinets displaying Catherine the Great china. The Drawing room next door is at the centre of the house and was created out of the medieval chapel. It was last decorated in grand French style in 1860 and furnished with French furniture and clocks.

The Dining room was refurbished in the 1980s and has a beautiful mahogany table in the centre. A large number of paintings adorn the walls and a display of silver plate including two samovars on a side table. There were lovely views from this room over the 200 acres of parkland bound by the River Nene.

The Hall has three libraries of which two are open to visitors. One Library was used by Lady Meredith over a 40 year period as her sitting room. The Inner Library situated in the medieval Sapcote Tower was repanelled in 1884 after a fire. The private collection totals 12,000 books, the largest in the country. Two old accounts books dating back to Elizabeth I were displayed on a table.

Our tour concluded in the Billiard room with William Morris wallpaper which is now used as a wedding venue.



After a delicious lunch at the attached Garden Centre we spent the rest of our visit in the extensive gardens, divided into rooms, which were beautifully kept. The Gothic revival orangery and garden built to celebrate the Millennium. The other gardens of note were the flower garden with its attractive central water feature and the topiary and shrub garden.

Our tour concluded with a short visit to Peterborough Cathedral with its fine painted wooden ceiling dating back to 1250, the Hanging Crucifix above the central aisle and intricately carved wooden choir stalls. A very enjoyable day out.

Report by Ann Notman

MANNINGTON HALL, NORFOLK FRIDAY 9TH AUGUST 2024

On a bright and breezy Friday morning a nearly full coach left Chelmsford for the long drive into rural Norfolk. In the capable hands of the unflappable Tim, we made good time to our refreshment stop at Thornham Walks. From past experience we knew this would be a long and leisurely visit. Thornham Walks is a centre for walkers and hikers, not set up for coach parties. It was half an hour later than scheduled when we resumed our journey along the winding country lanes. At least Thornham Walks is prettier than M-way services! It was not long before we were involved in the traditional scenario of coach meets tractor in narrow country lane, giving Tim a chance to show off his reversing skill, receiving a round of appreciative applause.

On a slightly later than scheduled arrival at Mannington Hall our large party was divided into two groups, one going to claim its pre-booked lunch, while the rest of us started our guided tour of the Hall.



Built about 1460 by a William Lumnor, it remained with the same family until the mid-eighteenth century when it was bought by the Walpole family and remains their family home to this day. In the fifteenth century many wealthy gentlemen liked their purely domestic country

residence, which was never likely to come under siege, to incorporate castle-like features. Mannington Hall has a crenelated roof line, turrets and a moat surrounding the building. Mr Lumnor stopped short at including a drawbridge, but the slightly rickety little wooden bridge, giving access over the water to the path leading to the front door, certainly has a nod to that design.

Our guide, widow of the late Lord Walpole, who died in 2021, first showed us round four rooms on the ground floor. In the dining room the magnificent table can be extended several times, but is supported on only four legs, enabling many visitors to get their feet under the table! Lady Walpole explained that the chairs that go with the table are not only antiques but reproductions. She explained reproduction furniture is put through a process called “distressing” to give it an aged appearance, but added that after forty years of family life these chairs don’t need it!

Of course, the most famous of the Walpole family is Sir Robert, acknowledged to be Britain’s first Prime Minister. In another room we were shown his Despatch Box, neatly divided into compartments, labelled “Business”, “Non-Business”, “Answered”, “Unanswered”. How would he have coped with emails?

Displayed in a cabinet in another room was a set of China specially commissioned from a pottery in China to mark a Walpole wedding. The level of communication involved must have been breathtaking, considering that they didn’t have phones or email, not even airmail! Upstairs were further parts of their extensive collections.

There are a number of gardens to be enjoyed in the grounds surrounding the Hall, including a heritage rose garden and sensory garden. There a few trees remaining from the Victorian era and most of those we see today are thanks to a substantial tree planting overseen by Lord Walpole in 1969. The estate walks are open to the public throughout the year, but the Hall

can only be visited through prior booking. Thank you, Paul, for a happy day in a green and pleasant place.

Report by Shirley Deering

Tiger, Tiger, What a Fright! Or just another shaggy dog story?

“Richard! You’re very late!”

“Yes, sorry, I was delayed by a tiger.”

“A tiger?”

“Yes, came face to face with it in Sea View Road. Well not a big, strong, fierce tiger, more of a half-grown cub, but still quite scary.”

“And what was a half-grown but still quite scary tiger cub doing in Sea View Road?”

“It had escaped from the exotic pet rescue centre.”

“Where’s that?”

“You know Laburnham Lodge?”

“You mean that big old derelict house that used to belong to some Baronet or other? Thought that was going to be demolished.”

“Yes, it will be eventually. Meanwhile a group campaigning for the banning of the trade in exotic pets has taken a short lease on the grounds and set up a sanctuary for rescued exotic pets.”

“Sounds a good cause, I’m surprised I’ve not heard of it.”

“They haven’t got money to spend on publicity”.

“But surely that is the whole point of a campaign? You publicise your aims and objectives in order to attract funding and get more supporters to join you.”

“It’s early days yet.”

“So how many animals are there in this sanctuary?”

“Only the tiger.”

“And now he’s escaped!”

“Oh, but he’s been recaptured.”

I went down Esplanade Avenue to get away from the tiger and met a very worried-looking man who asked if I’d seen a tiger. I said yes, he’s in Sea View Road. He was very pleased, explained he was from the sanctuary and advised me to keep out of the way while he went and shot the animal with a tranquiliser dart. There’s a warehouse in Esplanade Avenue with an outside metal staircase so I went and climbed part-way up it, thinking tigers probably can’t climb metal stairs.

After a while I thought it should be safe to venture down and find out what was happening. I cautiously made my way to Sea View Road and peeped round the corner. Sure enough the tiger was sprawled out on the road, unconscious. Then a truck drove up and stopped beside the animal. The driver let down a ramp at the rear of the vehicle, got out, grabbed one of the tiger’s front legs and started pulling it aboard.”

“That’s disgraceful, no-one should treat an animal like that. You saw the man actually pulling the tiger’s leg?”

“That’s right, just like I’m pulling yours now!”

Story by Shirley Deering

REPORT on NT HOLIDAY in LIVERPOOL 2nd to 6th September 2024

Monday 2nd September

TATTON PARK was our first place to visit enroute to Liverpool. Two comfort stops and reasonable traffic brought us to the estate in early afternoon. Unfortunately, being Monday, the house was closed. All I can say is that the Egertons lived there for 400 years. The leaflet I picked up looked interesting, so visiting the mansion will have to be added to the "to do" list. The galloping horses carousel was also shrouded, but we did find the garden open.

Walking through another door the garden suddenly appeared, expanding like the Tardis, into acres of manicured lawns, woodland walks, lakes and follies. What a surprise.



The main avenue, called the Broad Walk, led to the Choragic Monument, but as there was no explanation board, we have no idea of what or who it represented. The avenue led to the Japanese Garden. Bridges and gates into the garden were locked but there was a path round the perimeter which gave different "peeps" as we walked round. It was tranquil with lush green moss lawns, a Shinto temple and symbolic statuary of Mount Fuji, a fox, cranes and lanterns, all for good luck and longevity. One acer had started turning bright red, just finishing off a perfect picture.

Our walk back to the coach led us past an African hut, an orchard and a giant gunnera. There was still so much we could have explored, but it was time to leave. Tatton Park was well worth the visit.

Tuesday 3rd September

This was to be the "church day" and park in the afternoon. Our first visit was to the RC METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL OF CHRIST THE KING, affectionately called Paddy's Wigwam. Our guide, Marianne, was full of information and anecdotes, giving us a brief history of the building before we descended into Lutyens Crypt. In 1933, the foundation stone was laid for the construction of the cathedral on the site of a Victorian work house. The vast crypt is an astonishing space with intricate brickwork and vaulted ceilings, lead light windows and stained glass. The rising sun motif is depicted throughout the crypt. WW2 interrupted the building of the cathedral, due to lack of manpower and escalating costs, but the completed crypt was used as a bomb shelter, church and meeting place for the residents of Liverpool.



In 1960, Archbishop Heenan launched a world-wide architectural competition to complete the project. Frederick Gibberd, an Anglian and later off "New Harlow" fame, was chosen and fund raising was started in earnest. Marianne remembered that as a

schoolgirl she collected milk bottle tops, silver paper and green shield stamps. Many bingo sessions were also held and the new cathedral was finally completed on budget and on time, and opened in 1967. The Wigwam is a vast circular space with a central lantern and 12 chapels round the perimeter.

Each is a different shape housing works of art by contemporary artists. We were told that this innovative design sadly had many problems and to date, the cost of repairs was greater than the whole cost of the build of the cathedral. Workmen noisily erecting scaffolding inside was a testament to this, so the fund raising has not stopped. The cathedral, and especially the crypt spaces are rented out for external exams, graduation ceremonies, concerts, craft fairs and beer festivals.



Long narrow perpendicular windows of different shades of primary coloured glass are arranged around the circular space. Depending on the time of day and the weather, different beams of coloured light shine across the congregation and the interior. The red set of windows were just casting their light as we left. Magical.

A short drive away is the LIVERPOOL ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL. In 1903 the design submitted by Giles Gilbert Scott, a Roman Catholic aged just 22, won the competition. His previous achievement had been to design a pipe rack. Two world wars stopped and started the building project but the cathedral was finally completed in 1978. It is the longest cathedral in the world and very imposing but a hot drink, toasted sandwich and a sit down were our first priorities.

On reading the pamphlet about the cathedral we noted that the 331 feet tower was open to the public. We decided that we would start there. Two lifts and 108 steps later we had a breathtaking 360-degree view of Liverpool's iconic skyline, and the sun was shining. We were so surprised by how many green spaces, neat Georgian Squares and wide avenues we could see. The waterfront was visible and so were the Three Graces, consisting of the Royal Liverpool Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building. We were informed that on 2 week-ends in September, one was allowed to abseil down the tower. Thankfully this was Tuesday!

We just had time to look at Anish Kapoor's installation called "Monadic Singularity". It was a single red flute shape on one side of the giant blue cube which offered a different opening on each of the other sides with unexpected telescopic views of the High Alter and the Great West Window. One could climb inside the cube too, a strange experience. And its meaning?



The last visit of the day was to SEFTON PARK. It was good to stretch our legs and get some fresh air. The park itself consists of lawns, woodland walks, a boating lake, a bandstand and the main attraction, the Palm House. The Victorian structure was filled to the brim with huge tropical plants and creepers. There was also a Jazz Band playing easy on the ear Trad Jazz. We noted some

of our party tapping their feet in time to the music. We took advantage of the fine weather and strode out to explore the park. A welcome discovery was the Park Cafe, near a replica of the Eros statue at Piccadilly Circus, which sold delicious ice-cream. Highly recommended if you come this way again.

Wednesday 4th September

SPEKE HALL was the main visit of the morning with about 30 members going on to see the childhood homes of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. We chose to spend the whole day at Speake. As those going on the afternoon visit were given priority to see the house first, we decided to do the garden and grounds. It was a good decision as the morning was cold but dry and got miserable and wet later on.

As we strolled through the ancient woodland we ignored the noise of planes taking off from the John Lennon Airport just a stone's throw away. In fact, the emergency access gate and runway borders one side of the estate and leads to the coastal path with views across the Mersey estuary. The wood walk led to the secret garden, a path crisscrossing a rill of water and rickety bridges. There was also a kitchen garden with enthusiastic helpers ready to give advice on matters horticultural and offer produce to taste. The black tomato tasted like a red one.

We decided to go on the Tudor guided tour of the outside of the house. A one time history teacher, named Sue, was a fund of information on the architecture, occupants and owners and historic relevance of motifs on the brick work. Catholics during the Reformation



period had to take care and be prepared with priest holes, whispering corridors and lookout chambers.

Inside the Tudor building we came across most informative guides who spoke about the Norris family. William, already a rich man, married well and had 8 children with his first wife and 11 with his second wife. All the children survived, except Richard, the eldest, who was killed in battle. The 16th century timber framed house was embellished with decorative panelling and is surrounded by a moat.

In 1795 Speke Hall was bought by the Watts family. Richard had gained his wealth through the slave trade. Money was used to restore and refurbish the house. An internal corridor running all the way round the interior of the house meant that you no longer had to go through a room to get to another room. The corridor provided privacy in the rooms and eliminated the need for a long gallery for exercise in inclement weather. The moat was drained and turned into a garden.

Frederick Leyland and his family were tenants at Speke in the 1860s. He introduced William Morris wallpaper, Arts and Craft furniture and built a billiard room. When Whistler visited, he painted a picture of a billiard evening with him fast asleep on the bench awaiting his tum to play.

Adelaide Watts, a serious looking spinster, returned to Speke when her parents died. She became an expert in running the estate, which prospered under her care. She installed central heating, a "modern" bathroom, but still slept in a 4- poster bed. She died in 1921 and Speke Hall was given to the NT in 1943. Conservation is continuous. Last year the cobbled stones in the courtyard were weeded by hand.

An infestation of moths in the oak panelled room this year, was being treated. All the furniture and furnishings had had to be bubble wrapped and sent to an industrial freezer facility where they were subjected to 72 hours of intense cold. The unwrapping stage was in progress when we viewed the room. Hopefully all the moths and their eggs are now deceased. We rushed through the last rooms as it was "that *time* "again. Another interesting day had been had.



Twenty-eight of us visited the childhood homes of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. We were picked up by mini-bus at Speake Hall and driven to each home in turn.



The guides gave us the history of both boys growing up, both having lost one of their parents at a young age. It was on this tour I discovered that Strawberry fields is situated behind John Lennon's childhood home! What I found particularly interesting was the architecture of John's 1933 home and Paul's 1952 council house together with the memorabilia. It was unusual to be aware of history being made in my lifetime in these houses. *(This paragraph is by Paul Chaplin)*

Thursday 5th September



The day commenced with a 50-minute Ferry Cruise on the Mersey. It was a short stroll down to the waterfront from our hotel where we boarded the ferry which took us on our trip along the Mersey waterfront. Unfortunately, on deck we were unable to hear the commentary because of the diesel engine noise.

We travelled over to the Birkenhead side looking at the various buildings of interest, including the Town hall, St Mary's Tower and Cammell Laird shipyard where various military vessels were being serviced. On the Liverpool side we had an excellent view of the Pier Head, home to the iconic three Graces, (the Liver Building with its clock towers and two Liver birds one watching over the city and the other out to sea, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building).

Further along the waterfront we could see the Museum of Liverpool opened in 2011 situated on Mann Island between the Three Graces and Albert Dock. Next to the dock is the M&S Bank Arena which hosts various music events and conventions throughout the year.

After our ferry trip we had free time to spend in Liverpool. We headed to the Museum of Liverpool which provided an insight into the history and life of the people of Liverpool with their diverse stories and experiences.

The Liverpool overhead electric railway was particularly interesting as it was the first electrically operated elevated railway in the world. Built in 1893 to ease congestion along the seven miles of the Liverpool docks, it was also marketed as a tourist attraction as it provided amazing views of the docks, shipping and transatlantic liners on the Mersey. There were also displays featuring people who worked and travelled on the railway. Unfortunately, the railway was bombed during the war and finally closed in 1956.

For the Beatles fans in the group there was a collection chronicling their careers from the early days in the Cavern club to solo projects after the band split up. Several members had photos taken in front of the statues of the 'fab four'.

Friday 6th September

We started our journey home, calling in at Dunham Massey, near Altrincham. On arrival the sun came out and it promised to be a lovely day. As the house did not open until 12 noon we had a very pleasant walk around the grounds, including a visit to the Orangery and renowned rose garden.

The house and 3,000-acre estate, including the medieval deer park, was donated to the National Trust on the death of the 10th Earl of Stamford (Roger Grey) in 1976. During his lifetime he spent time and effort in locating family possessions that had been removed and sold and reinstated them into the house. These included a collection of family portraits, a group of paintings of the house and grounds known as the 'Harris Views' and a collection of Huguenot silver.

Our tour of the house began in the servant's quarters which included the Laundry, Dairy and Kitchen and displaying memorabilia from times passed. The Butler's Pantry had a display of Edwardian glassware. In later years Roger was known to take meals in there, in the company of his butler, rather than sitting alone in the Dining Room. From the Dining Room we went into the Great Hall which was being refurbished and the carpet had been removed for moth treatment.

During the war the Saloon was used as the largest patient ward in Stamford Hospital. When the war ended the furnishings were returned and Roger and his sister used this room to entertain friends.



The Green Silk Room is one of the most decorative rooms in the house. It was used by Roger's friend Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia during his visit in June 1938. The room enjoys the best views out over the formal gardens towards the Orangery. Also on this floor was the Queen Anne bedchamber with its

rich and opulent fabric and magnificent four poster bed.

Then on to the Library which houses 3,500 historic books which are a part of the Dunham Massey collection. Over the fireplace is a wood carving of the Crucifixion by renowned Grinling Gibbons. The final room of our visit was to Roger's Study which held memorabilia and mementoes of all things he held dear. In the early afternoon we left Dunham Massey to journey on home after a very interesting holiday.

Reports by Hanna Gillett & Ann Notman

Please consider e-mailing on this newsletter to people you know who may or not be National Trust members and encourage them to join the National Trust and C&D NT SG. Membership of our group is only £5.00 single and £9.00 for a pair per year. Our Membership Secretary is Colin Jay ColinJay68@gmail.com and phone no 01245 350955

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**For large print copy please contact Paul on
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National Trust AGM is on the 2nd November 2024 in Newcastle upon Tyne

It has come to Chris and my attention, this year, for the first time, ***members will not receive their AGM agenda and voting papers by post*** – unless you follow the correct procedure. Members need to access the NT website AGM section and follow the instructions. **Closing date for requesting the AGM pack by POST is by 5pm 11th October 2024**

If considering attending, watching online or voting you must register online by the
25th October 2024.

If you are not on-line telephone 0333 234 3508