

TRIPS & VISITS 2014

JANUARY 2014: GALLERIES OF JUSTICE & ADAMS RESTAURANT

Galleries of Justice

The tour was led by amusing actors taking the part of prisoners from the 18th century. We first experienced a trial where our members were both witness and judge. Leniency was not an option and the prisoner was sentenced to death. We saw the dank and pestilent conditions in which the prisoners were incarcerated with many being eventually transported to Australia.

After only an hour or so even the wearing of woolly coats could not stop everyone feeling frozen. It was a fascinating tour and we gratefully escaped to the cafe for a welcome cuppa.



The Adams Brasserie

The Adams Brasserie was beautifully laid out for us. The student waiters and chefs were very nervous as they had only started their course last September and this was their second week in the actual restaurant. The food in the main was excellent although the service especially at one of the tables was a "little" slow. Overall they did a really good job and I wish them all the very best in their future careers.

JANUARY 2014: WHISKY TASTING

A gathering of thirty whisky lovers gathered at the Richard Herrod Centre to experience the warm glow of a whisky tasting evening led by local whisky doyen Tony Harrison. We tasted four differing whiskies – Glenfiddich, Balvenie, Ledaig and Old Pulteney. Tony was able to offer interesting facts

about each sample e.g. how / where they were distilled etc, as well as being able to answer general questions about whisky from the 'floor'.

After sampling each whisky, guests were able to choose their favourite for an 'afore ye go' (Balvenie being the favourite). What whisky remained was raffled, the money raised was the Striders Walking Group's contribution to U3A Fundraising.

Thanks to Tony for his expertise, to Ranjit for his kind sponsorship of the event and as ever to Anita Frost and the staff at the Richard Herrod Centre for their help on the evening.

Neil Kendrick

FEBRUARY 2014: BIRMINGHAM SEA LIFE CENTRE

Armed with our Kellogg's Cornflakes 2 for 1 vouchers we arrived at Sea Life to find arguably more children than fish. Apparently parents take their children in school holidays but schools take whole classes in term time. Their excitement was clear and their screams of delight when shown the Sea horses were piercing.

Towering over the children we were able to see the Rays then the Otters being fed. Afterwards some of us stroked the sea anemones which clung to our fingers with their suction pads. Walking through the glass tunnel with sharks and huge turtles overhead was fascinating.

Interesting fact - Clownfish start life as males and live inside a sea anemone, together with a female clownfish. The female prevents the males from changing sex by bullying them. When she dies, the largest male change sex and takes over her role.

It was a lovely walk from Sea Life to the Bullring. After leaving the canal we passed the magnificent new Birmingham Library, two war memorials, Victoria Square with a 6 meter high Iron Man sculpture by Antony Gormley and every shop you have ever heard of twice.

MARCH 2014: DUXFORD AIR MUSEUM

The day dawned for our trip to Duxford – thankfully a dry day as rain would have made the walking between the different museums unpleasant to say the least. IWM Duxford is set within the spacious grounds of the former First and Second War Airfield and we were able to see some of the most iconic aircraft in the world. There is an impressive collection of over two hundred aircraft as well as tanks, military vehicles and boats.

A 1917 Belfast hangar hosts the Battle of Britain exhibition which the majority of our group would have appreciated – it brought back so many memories including the Anderson shelter which I had in my back garden as a child! The American Museum contrasted dramatically as this is architecturally very striking. We were fortunate enough to be shown several aircraft by the American guide, including the U2 spy plane, (Gary Powers), a stealth bomber, a warthog and the Flying Fortress. He had been based in East Anglia and has married an English girl, and his choice of home is in Thetford, Norfolk!

I felt privileged to board the Concorde and even more impressive was standing underneath the wing! I was amazed it only sat 100 people, a lot of plane for few people! Also we were able to go into the cockpit of a Trident – the guide was happy for us to do this as they weren't busy! As it was still the "closed" season for Duxford, only one cafe was open, but there still seemed to be an awful lot of people visiting!

We arrived on the dot of 10.00 – official opening time – and I wondered how we were going to fill five and a half hours – but magically the time flew in a most interesting way. Our search for a Meteor proved successful, which brought back memories of National Service Days, and I found the

communications room fascinating. I suppose the icing on the cake would have been an air display, but we will have to save that for another day!

This was the first trip I had organised for U3A and my heartfelt thanks must go to Sue Fairweather who nursed me through the whole performance! However the thanks I got from the group were so heart-warming I feel suitably encouraged to organise another trip – but not yet!

Janet Whitchurch



APRIL 2014: HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

The Sahara sands were still hanging over London but at least it didn't rain. The sun even burst through the clouds albeit after we embarked on our journey home.

There are many things you can do for free in London but in my opinion a 90 minute tour of the Houses of Parliament must be around the top of the list. English heritage also offered us free entry into the Jewel Tower, one of only two buildings from the medieval Palace of Westminster to survive the fire of 1834.



MAY 2014: BBC STUDIOS

Eleven of us visited the BBC Nottingham studios on London Road. Our guide Sumeer, a broadcast journalist on the TV desk, initially gave us a tour of the radio and tv newsrooms, including production control. We then visited Paul Robey in the radio studio, who chatted with some U3A fans of his late show and took requests for inclusion in his next broadcast.

After this we watched the live broadcast of East Midlands Today in the conference room and were shown on a variety of screens what happens behind the scenes during the show. We saw how the production team links together the studio and outside broadcasts, cues the presenters and how important the autocue script is.

Next we visited the actual studio of East Midlands Today, whose small size surprised many of us. Weather Presenter Anna Church provided a detailed explanation of her role and what happens during live transmission of the forecast. She also took pictures of the group sitting on the hallowed curved red settee. Mick Horrocks had a stab at delivering the weather forecast. (Anna's job is secure.)

Finally, we were introduced to the skilful technicians responsible for vision and sound quality, who spoke enthusiastically about their jobs. If you have a chance to join a future visit to the BBC I would recommend it. You are given a warm welcome and you are struck by the complexity and team effort required in radio and TV broadcasting.

Maggie Doherty.



MAY 2014: TISSINGTON

Having been lucky with the weather once again we arrived at Tissington Hall to be greeted by Sir Richard FitzHerbert. Sir Richard inherited the hall and the estate from his uncle, the late Sir John

FitzHerbert at the age of 24 in 1989. We were given an overview of the challenges of renovating 48 Victorian chimneys and over 3000 window panes whilst looking after 4 children and 6 dogs. Looking after Tissington Hall and the estate was clearly a full time job especially on well dressing week and Sir Richard had to give up his tickets to watch cricket at Lords to his step son because of this.

Our private tour of the hall and gardens was fascinating and we were able to admire Chippendale furniture, Myson china and much more. Amongst all this it was reported that Sir Richard, in the event of a fire would firstly save the ball he was presented with from the Ashbourne game second to a very expensive portrait of his ancestor.

The well dressings were brilliantly done with a WW1 theme and certainly made you pause for thought. The short circular walk took you past a very good quality local butchers, the garden centre and the Olde Sweetie Shop. I can verify the pies and sweets were scrumptious and hope all the plants that were purchased survived the journey home.



JUNE 2014: SOUTHWELL TREASURE HUNT

Anyone getting on the 11:00am *Pathfinder* bus on June 25th would have found it rather busy as over thirty U3A members descended on the historic town of Southwell to take part in a treasure hunt.

Some of the locals in the town were bemused to see small groups of people scurrying from pub to pub, peering intently at old photographs and posters in search of answers to the fiendish clues that had been set by the quiz master.

After three hours of hunting everyone gathered at the Admiral Rodney and sat in the sunshine while the results were processed. Congratulations to the winners – Sue & Noel Lake and Mick & Gill Horrocks.

Many thanks to the organisers; Neil, Brian and Keith who selflessly spent many hours visiting the local hostelrys, doing the research that made the event possible.

Graeme Bunting

JUNE 2014: YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK

A group of thirty visited the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Fortunately, the weather was good so we were able to fully appreciate the beauty of the park, which is set in a stunning rural location.

Our guide, Tom, provided an interesting and entertaining insight into the sculptures and history of the grounds on the Art and Landscape Tour, which included works by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Anthony Gormley and Jean Miro.

We saw exhibits by American artist Ursula von Rydingsvard, who works mainly in cedar wood (and even pigs' intestines). Her work reflects her Eastern European ancestry.

A highlight of the visit was the newly restored Chapel where the metal tree and empty chair exhibits by the renowned Chinese artist Ai Weiwei prompted much discussion. We rounded off the visit with a short drive to the Longside Gallery and the Land Art in Britain collection.

Maggie Doherty.



JULY 2014: BARNSDALE GARDENS AND STAMFORD MARKET

This turned out to be an eventful but very pleasant day. After a short delay we arrived at the gardens in cooler than expected weather conditions. The many small gardens were really interesting to wander around and our members were seduced into buying some quite large plants at bargain prices.

By the time we arrived in Stamford the day had warmed up, the sun had come out and coats were duly left on the buses. Some members walked along the river, others had lunch and some shopped 'till they dropped. The street market seemed to offer very good value and the bespoke boutiques did a roaring trade. After a lovely day all the shopping and plants were squeezed onto the buses and we had an uneventful journey home, well almost!

One of the mini buses broke down at the traffic lights at Tesco's in Carlton in the middle of the road. The electronic gear box was faulty. After a few minutes Alan managed to get the bus going but had to drive the half mile to Richard Herrod in first gear. The bus subsequently broke down again just before our destination. After the passengers had departed and following a further six break downs Alan finally returned the bus to the garage!

AUGUST 2014: GRIMESTHORPE CASTLE

We were very impressed upon arrival at Grimesthorpe Castle to see a welcome sign for Carlton and Gedling U3A on the gates. The day just got better and better when we were offered a lift to the cafe for tea and biscuits in their little trolley bus.

We were all given a private tour of the castle before it was opened to the general public. The rooms are lavishly furnished and we saw the guest bedroom that Camilla recently stayed in and Queen Victoria's throne.

After lunch some of us walked around the gardens with the Head Gardener. It was fascinating to hear how the gardens had changed not always for the better over the years. The vegetable garden and the herbaceous borders were beautiful and the newly trimmed topiary stood very well with the castle as a back drop. The rest of us were provided with a coach tour of the grounds. An excellent tour guide provided us with lots of information about the Park of 3000 acres. Interesting to know that the longer your tree lined drive, the richer you were considered to be – Grimesthorpe's being a good two miles!

In a hollow where the monks had quarried limestone there is now a wealth of growth of wild flowers, much to the excitement of conservationists and "Countryfile". The blue gentian flower has been seen to grow there and they are hoping to extend the area of growth. Horse chestnuts have already been attacked by three different diseases and the local fire engine was called in to spray them to no avail. Dead trees are not removed as they provide a home for beetles, moths and bats. There are 20 tenant farmers giving an income to Grimesthorpe. Originally there were 200 houses for the workers on the estate, but only 24 of these properties are now rented out.



SEPTEMBER 2014: EGLANTINE VINEYARD

The vineyard was a superb find, nestled in the Leicestershire countryside. The hot, yes I said hot, September sun beat down on us as Veronica gave us a fascinating talk about her husband Tony's passion for producing British wine. It all started with a cutting taken from a vine at Hampton Court and the business has now grown to a 4 acre vineyard and winery. After seeing the bumper crop of grapes and the winery it was a great pleasure to sample the wines. My personal favourite was an award winning desert wine called North Star. This wine was unfortunately not for sale as last week the specially sourced wine bottles had fallen unceremoniously out of the delivery van. Oops!!! If anyone is looking for a little job, Veronica is looking for pickers and vine trimmers. The grapes are even cultured to grow at waste height so it doesn't give the pickers back ache.

After the wine tasting we had an excellent lunch at The Rancliffe Arms in Bunny and this evening I am going to test one of the wines I bought for medicinal purposes only!



OCTOBER 2014: CAMBRIDGE

In the warm October sunshine we made our way to Kings College. The windows and ceiling of Kings Chapel were stunning and not a weed was to be seen on the beautifully lawned courtyards.

With plenty of free time the open top bus was very popular passing the American Cemetery where many unknown soldiers are buried. The Fitzwilliam Museum houses artefacts from the ancient world to contemporary art by Monet, Cezanne and Renoir. The Botanic gardens were a pleasant interlude to the hustle and bustle of the town centre and it was lovely sitting in the sunshine having lunch surrounded by the exotic plants. The Corpus Christi clock was amazing if a little weird with a huge bug opening and closing its jaws on the top.`

The punt tour was not to be missed. With the absence of cranes, to our delight, two hunky young men helped us into the Punts. The hilarity continued when they demonstrated how stable the boats were by swaying them from side to side. The screams and laughter could be heard all over the river. We were given a running commentary as we glided serenely down the river and discovered a convent that had been converted into a college as the nuns kept getting pregnant. Apparently there is a tradition at Kings for the students to deposit objects on the Chapel or college roof. The largest object was a lecturer's car which was dismantled by the students then put back together on top of the chapel roof. It took them 4 hours to achieve this feat but it took the college 3 weeks to get it back down again. We saw a large cylindrical object on one roof that has not yet been noticed by the powers that be.



NOVEMBER 2014: DONINGTON PARK

A small, but very select group of 12 enjoyed a visit to the Grand Prix Collection at Donington Park on Thursday 13th November. We marvelled at the number and variety of Grand Prix racing cars that the enthusiast Tom Wheatcroft managed to acquire in a life devoted to motor sport and the development of this local circuit.

The exhibition fills three halls and is now supplemented by the Wheatcroft Collection of WW1 vehicles and motor cycles, mainly of German origin. We are lucky to have such a prestigious attraction so close to home.

Understandably, absorbing all the detailed information and exploring the collection resulted in hunger and thirst that could only be satisfied by a visit for most of the party to the Willowbrook on our return.

Maggie Doherty

NOVEMBER 2014: MANSFIELD MRF

If you have any queries about what happens to the contents of your green recycling bin, C&G U3A now has a number of experts on hand. Two groups visited the Veolia plant in Mansfield on 25th

November. After a warm welcome by our guide, Victoria, we watched a short video, donned hard hats, visibility jackets and headphones and embarked on our tour of the huge facility where recycled materials are sorted. A mountain of materials is dumped at one end of the plant and 15 minutes later the contents emerge at the other end bundled into bales of paper, metal or plastic. The sorting is mainly done by state-of-the-art machines, but some unsuitable materials can only be identified and rejected by hand.

I think we were all impressed by the efficiency and relative cleanliness of the facility and everyone learned something new, for example, the need to remove all plastic caps and not to put shredded paper into the green bin. Victoria impressed us with many statistics, including:-
By recycling one 2L plastic bottle you save enough energy to power a television for 52 minutes.
Recycling a 500ml bottle would provide sufficient energy for 1.5 hours of TV.

We left enlightened and inspired to be even greener.

Maggie Doherty



DECEMBER 2014: THURSFORD CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

56 of us enjoyed a really memorable day, even the lunch was good. Thursford lived up to its name and was truly spectacular. Set in the magical surroundings of mechanical organs and fairground carousels, a cast of 130 professional singers, dancers and musicians delivered an extravaganza of non-stop singing, dancing, music, humour and variety. There was an eclectic mix of both seasonal and year-round favourites, with famous and much-loved chart toppers being sung alongside traditional carols.

