

Visit to Catton Park/Hall on Monday 8th July

When I typed 'Catton Park' into Google it took me to a place over near Norwich, which seemed a bit far for an afternoon's outing. However, on my second attempt I tried 'Catton Hall' and this gave me a beautiful 250-acre estate in South Derbyshire, owned by the same family for over 600 years, so I think this must be it. To be on the safe side, David Rooke sends directions;

'Take A38 – exit at Junction marked A513 – Alrewas and Tamworth. Turn left **over** the A38 and follow A513 marked 'National Memorial Arboretum'. Travel straight for 1.2 miles and go under the railway bridge and turn immediately left signed Catton Park. Travel for 1.4 miles – Catton Hall entrance is on your left.'

We need to arrive at **2.15pm** in order to set off by 2.30pm. David promises that tea and cakes will be served at the end of our tour— does that mean Rita will be spending the morning baking, I wonder? On the other hand the Hall runs something called a 'Seasoned Cookery School' (whatever that is) so maybe they'll be trying-out their recipes on us! - pw

Editorial matters:

Last time we definitely had a gremlin in the works. John Carrington's and David Rooke's articles disappeared into cyberspace, while John Cheal's offering was lost in the post. Then my computer blew-up a few days before the deadline, and I was in the New Forest when I should have been finishing the job. Thank goodness once again for Tony, who came to the rescue and printed the paper copies. He also wrote all of Page 7 and oddly, I can add a little postscript to his description of the old BT telephone exchange at Furnace End.

One of my hobbies is astronomy and about ten years ago I visited the 'Heart of England' Astronomical Society who met in that very same building. The story I was told was that at one time there were a couple of dead-keen astronomical types working for BT who'd managed to get permission to use the place as a meeting room. They'd scrubbed and painted it out, and it was immaculate, with rows of chairs for meetings, posters and photographs around the walls, and a good few telescopes in the cupboard. But unfortunately by then all the former BT employees had left and found other jobs, so the society really had no right to still be in the premises. Last time I heard they were living in dread of being found-out and evicted! However, I've just looked on Google and amazingly, they're still there, meeting every Thursday evening at 9.00pm.

Please let me have reports, news items (and pictures) as **early as possible** and certainly no later than the **Saturday before** the monthly General Meeting, using e-mail if possible. Ideally, reports should be around 350 words in length. While I sometimes may want to make minor editorial amendments I will always discuss any significant changes with the author. And here's the usual disclaimer; opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Committee.

The Newsletter appears on the club website and our Publicity Officer (Phillip Troman) may use it as the basis of material submitted to the local press.

Finally, in Ireland I discovered that my e-mail address in the new Handbook is **incorrect** and should be **pr.weston@btinternet.com**. Don't miss that 'dot', it's important! -pw

MAKING YOUR APOLOGIES

If you are unable to attend a General Meeting please advise **Mike Terry** by the **Sunday** before that General Meeting.

If you are unable to carry out the Vote of Thanks or the Newsletter Report please get in touch with **Peter Weston**, **well before** that General Meeting.

If you are unable to carry out your duties on the Kitchen Rota then please try and 'swap' with someone from the following month, advising **Graham Jones** of the change.



Sutton Park Probud Club

(Founded 1998)

President: Rod Crowley

Newsletter

No.176

June 2013

'TALES OF A TOUR GUIDE'

Report by John Booth*

"Are you real?" the American tourists ask, poking you with their fingers. As our speaker last month explained, this is one of the hazards of being a tour guide around the waxworks at Warwick Castle!

Joanne Carter spent fourteen years at the castle and her talk was liberally peppered with similar anecdotes. She appeared before us dressed as a Victorian maid, an outfit she wore when taking parties through the staterooms. Hence all the poking and prodding – they must be too accustomed to Disneyland animatronics!

As you will know if you've been to the Castle, the private apartments show a party given in 1898 by Daisy, Countess of Warwick for the Prince of Wales, with lifelike effigies of the future king, the Duke of York, and the young Winston Churchill. Apparently the bathroom scene really makes visitors jump, as the butler figure (filling a tin bath) sways gently on an uneven floorboard as they approach!

Joanne told us about the time she was chatted-up by a megabucks pop-star (who none of us had ever heard of), and turned him down. She was also clearly proud to have served as a model for a waxwork of Lady Warwick as shown on postcards she handed around.

She mentioned some of the celebrities who had visited the castle, such as Terry Wogan, Noel Edmunds, Fred Dibner and Julie Walters, to name but a few. While she hadn't been very impressed with Sir Terry and revealed that Noel Edmunds is only a little fellow, she thought Fred Dibnah was "lovely".

(Continued overpage)



Joanne Carter strikes a pose with her Mary Poppins umbrella and cabinet of souvenirs from her time at Warwick.



Quite a performance!! Dennis & Rod congratulate Joanne after her hour-long performance at the club. Photo by Tony Ferneyhough.

Joanne also assisted with outside activities such as the duels of armoured knights, and told us about the lady tourist (American again) who went up to a knight, resplendent in shining armour overlaid with the tabard of St George, to ask if he was a first-aid.

"Madam, I create the *need* for first-aid," he thundered.

"But you're wearing the Red Cross," she said.

"Madam, that is the flag of England!"

"Oh, I thought your flag had a lumberjack on it," the lady replied [*I think she probably meant 'Union Jack' not 'lumberjack'!*]

However, the most important visitor during her time there was Her Majesty the Queen. "This meant the SAS-DIY squad descended on the place," said Joanne. "Everything was re-decorated, all the corridors were painted red and new toilet facilities installed with a beautiful new mahogany seat." Although it was not made clear by whom it was discovered, Joanne confided that she knew what was in the small handbag which the Queen carries everywhere; apparently all it contains is just a pack of 'Pretty Polly' tights!

These and other revelations kept us entertained for an hour or more, and Mike Lock gave an enthusiastic vote of thanks.

** John's text, with a few editorial interjections for which I hope he will forgive me! - pw*

This month's Brain-Teaser; More 'Name that town' (or city)!

- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Piggott's first. | 2. Valuable dog's home | 3. Sheep's entrance | 4. Colourful girl |
| 5. Cat's paw | 6. Saucy city | 7. Dark blue bags | 8. Serious finale |

Last month's answers; 'Tumbler departs' = Glasgow; 'Fast-moving cereal' = Runcom; 'Elderly bird' = Swanage; 'Offal snooker' = Liverpool; 'Ship's company' = Crewe; 'First lady is a fake' = Evesham; 'Start at cards' = Deal; 'Witches have a go' = Coventry.



On Tuesday night we all went out for an amazing demonstration of Irish dancing, with a version of the broomstick hop performed by our own Irish lass Pat Court. If asked she may perform again at the President's Supper!

In the picture Pat is just being shown the steps before picking up her broomstick and doing a merry jig!

(Photo by Rita)

Back at the hotel, dinner choices were limited but adequate, until that night I foolishly asked for cheese and biscuits instead of dessert. The local equivalent of the cheese board turned out to be one slice of processed cheese, a bourbon biscuit, a custard cream, and a couple of jammy dodgers!

On Wednesday, after a morning stroll around the shops we set off on the coach for a trip to the seaside village of Malahide, with Alan telling us to look out for a couple of those Cranes he'd mentioned before. Of course they were dockside cranes! We then went on to the fishing port of Howth where with more time the choice of fish restaurants would have looked very tempting.

That night eighteen of us visited a local pub in O'Connell Street for a final evening of Irish singing including a few more pints of Guinness, before travelling home the next day, tired and emotional after the excesses of the previous four days. A big 'thank you' to our driver Alan and his wife Tracy (who acted as courier) and our organiser Jim Bailey, who would now like to set up as a travel agent.

Mine's a Guinness, Tank yo.

Hypnotised by Harry?

As we were walking down O'Connell Street we noticed the Millennium Spire, or 'Spike', a giant tapered column of stainless steel, erected (in typical Irish fashion) in 2003, three years late. We tried to guess how high it might be.

"150 feet" I said confidently, "it's only a couple of times higher than the buildings"

"Nonsense," said Harry, "it's 600 or 700 feet, easily."

"Rubbish," said Jim, "it's no more than 200 feet. Maybe only 150," he corrected.

Despite his own wild estimate, however, Harry somehow hypnotised Jim and me into betting £5 that it was higher than 200 feet.

Back at the hotel we checked—and it was 120 metres, or 391 feet. Harry won! But it didn't look that tall—not until we were at the top of the Guinness building, when you could see it really zoomed into the sky. And the tip is lit-up at night, quite spectacular. - pw

News just in—an ancient manuscript in Trinity College has been translated. It says, "Riverdance Part 2; the arm movements".

FOUR DAYS IN DUBLIN (9-13 June)

Report by John Buckland

In Dublin's fair city where the girls are so pretty, we first set our eyes on sweet Molly Malone. As she wheeled her wheelbarrow, through streets broad and narrow – they failed to tell us that by night she offered other services not mentioned in the song.

Twenty-nine of us went overland to Dublin, with ten others going by air. The coach had only just crossed into Anglesey when Jim received a text message from Rod, "sitting in hotel bar with large gin and tonic". Peter suggested we sent back, "Just opened third bottle of champagne."

Our driver, Alan, was a bit of a character, feeding us misinformation about the granite quarries of Colwyn Bay (it was limestone, and a cement works) and offering an 'island tour' by driving twice around a traffic roundabout. He also told us the Irish national bird is the Crane (it's actually the winter wren) and kept on about another curiosity, the pyecost, until Val Nightingale finally took the bait and asked "What's a pyecost?" to which his answer was "fifty pence".

On Monday Alan took us on a tour of the Wicklow mountains, stopping a local peat cutter on the road to cadge a huge brown lump of dried peat for our inspection.



Gilbert O'Rooke and Derek O'Sullivan, two shady characters seen lurking in the woollens department! (photo by Rita)

We visited the famous Avoca weavers with their centuries-old hand-loom, where David and Derek tried on traditional tam o'shanters (made in China), then went on to see the 6th-century monastery of St. Kevin (yes, really!), Enniskerry, and the seaside town of Bray.

Tuesday was a free day and we took the Hop-on, Hop-off bus which delivered us to Trinity College and the imposing Old Library. Hilary was enraptured by the vaulted wooden ceiling, cast-iron spiral staircases and galleries and the four and a half million feet of antiquarian books shelved in the building.

Then to the famous Guinness Storehouse where we ascended to the seven-storey-high 'Gravity Bar', bumped into Ian and Mollie and enjoyed a superb view of the city while partaking of the obligatory pints of the black stuff—the ladies only took a few sips but it seemed a shame to waste them.

(photo by John)

Report on Pub Amble from Alvecote Marina, 20th June

John Fellows had a tough act to follow after Roy's dry walk last month from the Bull. The weather had been super for the last couple of days - maybe a little muggy for some. This morning I was awoken by the steady fall of rain on the windows. John must have felt fearful that for the first time for ages we could possibly be squelching around in the mud (sorry, not supposed to mention the mud!).

Not too perturbed, however, some of us set off in torrential rain for a new venue at Alvecote (near Amington - Tamworth). The pub, The Samuel Barlow, is located next to the Marina and close-by the high speed rail link. Apparently Samuel Barlow (1847-1894) was the son of a boatman; he married in 1867 aged 20, and started his own business carrying coal from the local mines. A great deal of the coal was shipped by canal, and the marina and pub is a testament to him and his family's endeavours.

Directions were good and the meeting place was well signposted - even if your scribe managed to drive straight past on the first attempt! We all met up at the appointed time - a slightly smaller group than normal (probably because the holiday season is well underway). By now the weather had settled down and everywhere was dry. It made me think that this 'magic' ingredient could be transferred so I've made a note to ask questions at a later date.



The walk itself was very attractive along well-made paths alongside man-made pools in Pooley Park. Lots of shady glades and round the edges of the pools the bullrushes proliferated. Along the canal path we passed a former residence belonging to a famous reggae singer. As usual the chatter and friendly banter helped to consume the miles. A very pleasant walk.

Back at the pub we met up with a few more members for a memorable meal. The staff were very efficient. Even the 'cranky' Chef put in an appearance to entertain us with a few words. Rod wrapped up the proceedings by mentioning that it was probably the first time we had had three generations from one family and included three dogs on our walk. Well done John - there was no need to worry, but you may have to give the talisman back!

Report & photograph by Tony Ferneyhough

[My apologies to Roy Galloway whose excellent report on the Arboretum visit arrived too late for the last Newsletter and has been squeezed-out of the current issue—pw]

Events and Activities to October 2013

Thursday 27th June

'A Sweet Story' - Miss E. Scott
Vote of Thanks; John Buckland
Newsletter Report: Ray Clark

Kitchen Rota: John Booth,
Selby Betts, Terry Booth,
Roy Willson, Alfred Wallwork

Friday 28th June

President's Supper—The Terrace
 Harry Medcalf/John Cheal, coordinators

Thursday 4th July
Long Walk led by Rod Crowley

Monday 8th July
Catton Park & Afternoon Tea
 Organiser; David Rooke

Thursday 18th July
Short Walk led by Roy Willson
 from The Royal Oak, Kingsbury

Thursday 25th July

'Land Army Tales'
 - Mrs Margaret Madeley
Vote of Thanks: Phillip Troman
Newsletter Report: Bob Badham

Kitchen Rota: Peter Prime,
Barry Parsonage, David Roy,
John Cheal, Derek Smith

Thursday 1st August
Long Walk led by Rod Crowther
 Meet at Roy's at 9.30 a.m. to car-share

Sunday 4th August
BBBQ at the Fellows
 John Buckland, coordinator

Thursday 15th August
Short walk led by Roy Willson
 (details to be advised)

Thursday 22 August

'My visit to Afghanistan'
 - Mrs E. Perkins
Vote of Thanks: Richard Humphrey
Newsletter Report; Barry Parsonage

Kitchen Rota: Brian Mallett,
Tim Daly, Mike Gospel,
Dennis Rose, Ian Scholes

Thursday 5th September
Long Walk led by Don Cooper
 Meet at Roy's 9.30 a.m. to car share

Saturday 7—Monday 9th September
Autumn Break—'Downton Abbey'
(Highclere Castle)
 Jim Bailey, coordinator

Thursday 19th September
Short Walk led by Roy Willson

Tuesday 24th September
Ladies Bowls Day
 Organiser; Geoff Silvester

Thursday 26th September
'Born to Rule' - Diane Mannering
Vote of Thanks: Mike Gospel
Newsletter Report: Bryan Nicholas

Kitchen Rota: Neil Crabb,
Barry Gill, Denis Perkins,
Fred Nightingale, David Rooke.

Thursday 3rd October
Long Walk (to be advised)

Thursday 10th October
Short Walk & pub lunch
 (details to be advised)

Thursday 24th October
Club General meeting
Theatre visit (to be confirmed)

Report on Long Walk on Kinver Edge - Thursday 6th June

Compared to recent turnouts the group which gathered for Mike Lock's walk on Kinver Edge seemed small; five usual walkers, one lady and the welcome addition of John Fellows to keep an eye on things. Small, however, can be beautiful. For we chatted, joked and ate together as one, tackled the stiles, of which there were several, in record time and not a high visibility jacket in sight!

Although the forecast was for clear skies and sunshine, the walk began under full cloud, ideal for walking and particularly for the sharp pull onto the sandstone escarpment. On top it was a gentle stroll with views across three counties, with the Clee Hills to the west and nearby Clent on the eastern flank. After a drinks break at the summit viewing table, we dropped down past the Rock Houses to the edge of Kinver. Owned by the National Trust, the cave houses which were occupied until the 50s have now been restored with parlours and bedrooms as they used to be.

A steady climb through an avenue of broom and bluebells took us up the neighbouring hillside to our lunch stop. Here was the rural landscape at its best, hay meadows full of buttercups and wild flowers and lush, rolling, wooded hillsides. In the distance, towns at the heart of the Black Country, close but a world apart.

Maintaining height we traversed a wooded ridge before a steep, grassy descent took us back to the horse paddocks and isolated houses on the fringe of Kinver. A cup of tea, a quick dash up the M5 and back to Sutton and suburbia. Lovely day, lovely group, lovely walk. Thanks Mike!

- Barry Gill

Long Walk in the Peak District, Thursday 4th July (Note change from previous date of Monday 1st July)

Brian Spencer had previously agreed to mastermind the July Long Walk but he is still concerned about his bad knee [something with which I can sympathise since I have two of the things - pw] so Rod has taken on the job this time. Starting from Hartington, this will be a walk of about 6 miles, through varied peak district scenery. There are no serious climbs but a few stiles, including a couple over stone walls. Meet at Hartington duck pond by 10.45; car-share leaving Roy's by 9.10 a.m. Full details available from Rod.

Pub Amble on Thursday 18th July at The Royal Oak pub, Kingsbury

Once again Roy Willson is organising the short walk, which this time will be about three miles around Kingsbury Water Park, mostly on made-up paths. There are no hills or stiles but one flight of steps. Start is from the pub at 10.30 a.m. Directions as follows:-

Take the A4097 from Dunton island for about 2.5 miles. Turn right onto the A51 Coventry Road, and Kingsbury village is about a half-mile further on, where you will see the Royal Oak. Total distance about 10 miles from Sutton Coldfield.

If you want to take part and have not already signed-in, then to book your meal you need to contact Roy in advance (0121 308 6517).