

## SOCIETY OUTINGS 2009

Organised and Reported by Sylvia Ladyman *et alii*

### **Hampstead Heath and Hampstead Village with John Garrod – 2 May**

Twenty-Eight members of the Society met at Hampstead station South End Road for a walk through Hampstead.

The walk began along a path through an avenue of plane trees to the Heath - an 800 acre area of high ground which is the source of the Westbourne, Brent, Tyburn and Fleet Rivers. Geologically the heath is an area of poor sandy soil. We paused on the top of Parliament Hill fields to admire the views of London and beyond to the Surrey Hills. Nearer we noted Highgate Hill with its Church of St Michael's on the Hill.

Our walk now took us past the Highgate ponds - the Boating Pond, the Bird Sanctuary Pond, the Men's Bathing Pond, and the Ladies Bathing Pond. These were all made by damming the River Fleet. Further along we came to a swampy valley and saw the old viaduct built over a marsh. This was built by a hopeful developer in the 18th century. He built the viaduct only to have his building plans squashed. The City of London then bought the Heath to keep it as an open area within reach of London. There have been many other attempts to build on the Heath but so far they have been resisted.

Leaving the Heath and crossing East Heath Road into Wells Road near a large Victorian House built in 1868, we went along Well Walk passing the Old Parish Lock-up, then down Well Passage to the Chalybeate Well inscribed to the memory of Susanna Noel in 1698. John Constable the artist died in a house on Well Walk. Another famous resident was Marie Stopes. We passed Burgh House along Flask Walk and stopped to look at The Wells and Campden Baths built in 1885 for use by the Public. The name Flask Walk came from the use of flasks to carry away water sold from the well.

After lunch, in a very busy Hampstead, we walked up to Whitestone Pond on the highest part of the Heath. There was no

water in it which was disappointing. We noted an old milestone which gave directions and distances to St Giles and Holborn Baths, and a flag pole near the Armada Beacon. A gibbet used to stand on this site. We saw what used to be Jack Straws Castle Public House but this is now apartments.

Passing Hampstead Observatory we took the path named Judges Walk - this name commemorates the time when the Assizes were held in tents on the open ground near the gibbet! A windmill used to stand on this windy summit. We saw the house where Sarah Siddons lived, named Capodi Monte, and then arrived at The Little Green an area of charming houses. John Constable rented a house here for a year.

From here we went along Admiral's Walk and saw Admiral's House built with ship-like features by a naval officer. John Galsworthy the writer and George Gilbert Scott the architect had both been residents. Further down was the house of George Du Maurier who lived there from 1874 to 1898. He was Daphne Du Maurier's Grandfather and also a writer.

We stopped to look at Fenton House built in 1693 and now owned by the National Trust, which is famous for its collection of musical instruments. Further down the hill is Hampstead Grove leading to Hollybush Hill and the site of the old Consumption Hospital, the forerunner of Mt Vernon Hospital; remember the talk on Mt Vernon Hospital. This building is now apartments.

Other famous people who lived in this neighbourhood were George Romney the artist and Robert Louis Stevenson. We also saw the Watch House from which the police patrolled in the 1830s.

We passed St Mary's Roman Catholic Church built in 1816 where Charles de Gaulle worshipped during World War II. Further down Holly Walk is a cemetery in which many famous people are buried including Hugh Gaitskell, H. Beerbohm Tree and Kay

Kendall. St John's Church was re-aligned in the 19th century resulting in the altar being at the west end. John Constable and D.G. Harrison the inventor of the marine chronometer are buried in the churchyard.

We looked at the Georgian houses in Church Row; H.G. Wells lived at No. 17, Lord Alfred Douglas lived at No. 27, and other famous residents included Giles Gilbert Scott and Gracie Fields.

Toward the end of our walk we noted the drinking fountain, the Heath Library, and the house where John Keats lived and wrote Ode to a Nightingale in a street now called Keats Grove.

We arrived back at the station after a splendid walk with our heads buzzing with information and our feet aching with tiredness.

*Jessica Eastwood*

### **Walmer Castle and Sandwich – 27 June**

We left St Martin's Approach at 8 o'clock on our journey into Kent. On arrival at Walmer Castle at 10.15, the home of the Warden of the Cinque Ports, we were given two hours to explore the gardens and the Castle, and its fascinating history.

The Castle was built on the orders of Henry VIII in 1539 to counter a threat from the French, but it was not until the 18th century that the Wardens made the Castle their home. Alterations to the building were made to give more living space, and the soldiers rough quarters were transformed into pleasant rooms.

Originally the office of Warden was instituted in the 13th century by the King to control the sailors of the Cinque Ports who were turning to piracy, but after the 16th century the Cinque Ports were in decline and the Wardenship became a high honour given to distinguished men and women.

There have been many famous Wardens, for example - William Pitt the Younger, The Duke of Wellington, Sir Winston Churchill and the Queen Mother. There is a lovely garden which was created especially for the Queen Mother.

We began the tour in the Guard Room and downstairs rooms, all dating from the 1740s.

Some of the furniture dates from the time of William Pitt (1793–1805). The upstairs rooms now house possessions of previous Wardens. In the early years each Warden had to buy the furniture from his predecessor this resulted in many items being lost, however later Wardens have bought back exhibits of interest.

I was especially interested in the Wellington memorabilia. The chair in which he died was there, as well as his death mask and 'Wellington' boots. The locals had been allowed to come and pay their respects to his body before it was moved to London.

A suite of rooms used by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert during their month long visit in 1842 contains some of the furniture that they used.

W.H. Smith the publisher became Lord Warden in 1891 and he drafted an Act of Parliament to ensure that historical items could not be removed from Walmer and thus laid the foundations of these collections.

The Queen Mother's Minton dining service was laid out on the table in the dining room, and the Drawing room was displayed as it looked in the 1920s and 30s when Lord Beauchamp, who had seven children and was said to have been the model for the Flyte family in *Brideshead Revisited*, was Lord Warden.

The tour ended on the semi-circular bastion where the antique guns keep guard over the pebble beach and the sea.

We returned to our coach for the short journey into **Sandwich** which was one of the original Cinque Ports but is now two miles from the sea.

The Cinque Ports comprised Sandwich, Hastings, Dover, Romney and Hythe who agreed to provide ships and men to defend England in return for privileges and freedoms in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Eight hundred years ago Sandwich had an enormous natural harbour (The Haven) through which it exported wool and imported wine and luxuries to and from the Continent. It was a very important medieval port with a population of 3500. This is still the population today, as with the silting up of the Wantsum (the channel which

separated the Isle of Thanet from the mainland) The Haven dried up and the town atrophied.

Queen Elizabeth I in 1572 visited the town in an attempt to revitalise it. She visited the Court room in the Guildhall in which we saw the Mayor's wooden chair and Elizabethan carved animals. We started our town tour here.

The town plan resembles an open hand with five streets fanning out from the centre within a D shape formed by the river Stour and the ramparts. Most of the buildings are timber framed with later additions and facings.

We passed the White Swan on New Street, one of the twenty eight pubs which have ceased to trade since the 19th century. Now only eight remain in business the others have been converted into houses.

An interesting house in Delf Street was Malt Shovel house whose very lop sided door was evidence of its sagging timber frame. It also had the initials of two parishes side by side - important if the occupants needed to claim poor relief. All the houses had boot scrapers necessary to remove horse dung from footwear. Some houses had insurance plaques.

The river Delf - a ditch to supply water to the town surfaced here and there, the water flowing slightly to keep it fresh.

The town suffered damage and the Mayor was killed during a French attack in 1457. The area of Bowling Street had to be rebuilt after this destruction and our attention was drawn to the rows of late medieval timber framed houses. Some of which had been built by Flemish Protestant refugees, mostly weavers, who fled to Sandwich in the 1560s. These houses were distinguishable by their walls of thin bricks and large windows. Another house had been built around a very old doorway probably the only piece remaining of St Jacobs Priory.

Many of the houses had jetties overhanging the street. We noted that some houses dating from 1450s had had small shallow windows initially, but later these had been enlarged to give light for weaving. Most of the houses had been fronted in brick in the 18th century. We entered St Mary's Church noting the

Norman wall, barn type roofing and no tower. It was explained that an earthquake shook Sandwich in the 1570s resulting in the weakening of the church tower, which collapsed on to the church in 1668. It was repaired on the cheap, hence the barn style roof. Today it is just a shell and still used, but not as a church.

In Strand Street we passed the Kings Arms with the coat of arms of Elizabeth I. However the Queen did not sleep here but at the house of Mr Manwood - a very old house known as the Kings Lodgings which had originally had a hall open to the rafters. Along Harnet Street we saw the flint knapped wall of John Dairy's house. (He was the Mayor killed during the French Invasion). We took a short diversion along Potter Street noting a solid corner post protecting the building from the traffic.

We returned to Strand Street where the hefty timbers of the houses and their situation near the river lead historians to believe that these buildings could have been medieval warehouses. In Three Kings Yard there remains part of a rich Norman merchant's house dating from 1180.

The Barbican on the side of the river contains some medieval masonry. The Stour is now a river busy with pleasure craft. A Lutyens house stands at the end of the Quayside. It used to be obscured by the town gas works but these have now gone.

Fishergate is a broad alley leading up from the Quay to Quay Lane and Upper Fisher Street; both contain much medieval property. Thomas Becket would have walked through here on his return to England in 1170 and would probably recognise it today.

St Clements Church built in 1135 has a Norman tower and may have been built by the same masons who built Canterbury Cathedral. It is built of Caen stone, has the original floor tiles, and a medieval sound system, i.e. holes in the wooden foundations of the pews constructed by the Guild of St George to enable people to hear better.

From here we went along Church Street to a High Street without shops and then down Holy Ghost Alley which could have been the screen passage of a large house. The source of the name is not known.

So to our last church, St Peter's, whose tower also collapsed in the 1660s. This church was used by the Protestant refugees who, after the tower fell, built a new tower of bricks made of mud from the River Stour. The site of the original Guildhall was in this churchyard.

Our tour of this fascinating town ended by the War Memorial on King Street.

*Jessica Eastwood*

### **Bignor Roman Villa and Parham House - 11 July**

Bignor Roman Villa was one of the largest in Britain covering nearly two hectares (five acres) and still possesses some of the finest 4th century mosaics in this country. It was occupied by a farming family which increased the size of the villa as it grew in numbers. It is about 16 km (10 miles) from Chichester and about 100 metres from the Roman Stane Street which leads to that city.

It was discovered by George Tupper while ploughing in 1811 and the site is still owned by his descendants. Only about one eighth is on view, but there are explanatory plans showing details of the whole site in the small museum.

Members enjoyed walking on the original Roman floors and seeing the wonderful mosaics of Venus (whose eyes seemed to follow you as you walk around the room), Ganymede (an eagle is shown carrying off the young Ganymede), a dolphin (with the initials of the designer) and a medusa (in the changing room of the bath complex).

It was an enjoyable visit in spite of the fine rain which greeted us on arrival. One could only wonder how the Romans coped in a cold snowy winter, even if they did have under-floor heating.

**Parham House.** After the dissolution of the monastery of Winchester, Henry VIII gave the Manor of Parham to Robert Palmer, a London mercer who lived for a while in a small house on the estate. By 1577 the foundations were laid for a larger house, which it is said welcomed Elizabeth I in 1593. The estate covers 375 acres, as well as 300 acres of deer park.

As we arrived we saw a packed car park and people returning to their cars with arms full of plants – just like the last day of the Chelsea Flower Show. It was the first day of the Garden Weekend. The gardens were extensive with beautiful herbaceous borders and a four acre walled garden. There were stalls selling plants, garden furniture, sculptures, baskets and herbs etc.

However we were there to visit the house itself – all three floors, entailing a climb of sixty seven steps! According to Simon Jenkins this is one of England's top twenty houses. The first jewel is the Elizabethan Great Hall where the oldest piece of furniture in the House can be seen – a Tudor Oak Chest. The excellent portraits on the walls include those of Queen Elizabeth I and Edward VI. The 17th century flame stitch embroidery on the four-poster bed was remarkably preserved. The 160 ft. Long Gallery is the third longest in the country, with outstanding views of the surrounding countryside. It was restored in the 1950s and the ceiling replaced in 1960. The modern ceiling design of leaves and branches in no way detracts from the delight of seeing this Gallery. It was here that we saw a Roman lead cistern which was found in 1943 on the site of another Roman Villa near the River Arun on the Parham Estate.

After some refreshment in the restaurant we made our way to Ruislip in good time thanks to the driving of Mick Burcombe who was with us for the last time as he is retiring. A very enjoyable day despite the spells of rain.

*Sylvia Ladyman*

### **Hampton Court Palace and Gardens with John Garrod - 1 August**

**House** - It is hard to believe that this Palace was once a small estate office owned by the Order of St John of Jerusalem, who enlarged it in 1503 to welcome Henry VII. Cardinal Wolsey obtained the lease in 1514 and, expecting a visit from Henry VIII he ordered the construction of many of the Tudor rooms which remain today. However by 1528 Henry himself, to accommodate his Court of over 1000 individuals, added new kitchens, storerooms, the Great Hall and apartments.

Henry's apartments were demolished by William III as he wanted to create an English Versailles with the help of Sir Christopher Wren. William moved into his new rooms in the south and east wings of the Palace in 1700.

Before he could demolish the rest of the Tudor buildings William fell off his horse and died in 1702.

George II, the last monarch to live at the Palace, destroyed some Tudor apartments to make accommodation for his son, Duke of Cumberland. In the 19th century the brick chimneys were replaced, stained glass was put in several rooms, and many rooms became Grace and Favour residences. It was Queen Victoria who declared the Palace 'open to the public free and without restriction on certain days of the week'. Unfortunately we were not there on a 'certain' day as we had to pay!

**Gardens** - The rain greeted us on our arrival, but it soon stopped and we had an enjoyable tour of the gardens in the morning. To the north the influence of Henry VIII can still be seen, while those gardens to the south of the Palace have been restored to recreate the William III and Mary II garden.

Now to the north, where large quantities of vegetables were grown for the Tudor Court, we saw lawns and flower beds. Nearby, in the Tilt Yard was where jousting took place. The gardens had wonderful displays of flowers, and the cafe! In Spring the Wilderness is a beautiful sight with its carpet of daffodils. In nearby greenhouses 140,000 bedding plants and 20,000 bulbs are prepared for planting each year.

To the east of the Palace the Long Water, ordered by Charles II to impress Catherine of Braganza, extends over half a mile towards Kingston. Part of the land here was being reseeded to repair turf damaged as a result of the Flower Show held in July. Everyone was impressed by the William and Mary Garden - the flower beds edged with small box plants, the fountain, and the twelve wrought iron panels by Tijou erected in 1702 which separate the garden from the River Thames. Each panel had a symbol on it, e.g. a thistle, a harp, or garter star. We could not

leave the gardens without a visit to the Great Vine which was planted in 1768 by Lancelot Capability Brown who was head gardener here for eighteen years. It still produces 500 - 700 lb. of black eating grapes every year, which are sold in the shop.

**Interior** - As we stood at the main entrance to start our tour of the Palace itself, John indicated the Tudor kitchens on our left (N) and the Tudor 'Great House of Easement' on our right (S). The latter was a wing containing twenty eight male and female toilets over the moat!

Passing heraldic beasts, we entered Base Court, the first Court of the Tudor Palace. Here Tudor handmade bricks formed the walls of rooms for forty guests, each with a fireplace and toilet.

Clock Court is named after the fine astronomical clock over the archway. Made in 1540, the clock shows the hour, month, day of the month, signs of the zodiac, and the time of High Tide at London Bridge. The latter was most important in the 16th century as the River was the main means of travelling to London.

We climbed up the west side of Clock Court to the Great Hall, the largest room in the Palace, which was used as the dining room for the less important members of the Tudor Court. There were two sittings for each of the two meals a day - three hundred being fed at any one time. Around the walls were Flemish tapestries woven with gold and silver thread, and in the centre a pile of logs showing the position of the original fire. The louvre in the beautiful hammer beam roof has long since gone. The oak beams are covered in carvings, mouldings and even small heads. The stained glass, showing the coats of arms of Henry, his six wives and his surviving children, are Victorian additions. The Yeoman of the Guard and senior courtiers dined in the Great Watching Chamber. Here again the stained glass is Victorian, and shows the head of Henry and the insignia of the four sees held by Wolsey (Bath, Wells, Durham and York). This room has been beautifully restored recently with some of Wolsey's tapestries made in 1500, hung on the walls.

Soon we were in the Haunted Gallery, so called as it is said to be haunted by the ghost of Catherine Howard, Henry's fifth wife, who was caught here as she tried to escape. She was dragged back to her room by guards to await her fate at the Tower.

We were not allowed to enter the Chapel Royal with John as there was a wedding in progress. However some of us went in at the end of the afternoon. It was built in 1514 for Cardinal Wolsey, later enlarged and embellished for Henry VIII and finally redesigned by Wren for William III. The Kneelers, embroidered in 1970, depict the history of the Chapel and the Palace. The ceiling, constructed in 1535/6, is said to be the finest Tudor pendant vaulted ceiling in England, carved out of oak from Windsor and painted in blue and gold.

We left the Tudor Palace, and walked up a magnificent staircase with paintings by Verrio on the walls and ceiling to reach William III's apartments built in 1689/90. The Guard Room has guns on the walls in pleasing arrangements. The King's Presence Room has some of the most valuable 16th century tapestries and a portrait of William on horseback by Kneller. We noticed that this room and those following had a plain white ceiling, because in 1986 a resident in a Grace and Favour apartment above caused a fire which destroyed the original ceilings and also killed her.

The Privy Chamber was the most important room as it was William's main audience chamber. The canopy and chandelier were carefully restored after the fire. The Great Bedchamber, with its four poster bed and curtains, was only slept in by the King on rare occasions. He preferred to lie in a smaller bed in the Little Bedchamber. His study has his original desk, on which period candles and quill pens have been placed.

As we entered the courtyards leading to the Tudor Kitchens some of us thought we were in Marshalsea Prison as the recent TV adaptation of *Little Dorritt* was filmed here. John amazed us with the quantity of meat consumed by Henry's court in one year – 1240 oxen, 8000 sheep, 2360 deer, 760 calves, 1760 pigs and 53 wild boar! The kitchens covered one third of the whole area of the

Tudor Palace. There were fifty rooms, several courtyards, and over two hundred people worked there. There were rooms for the storage of fish, confectionary, spices, meat and vegetables. Two meals a day were produced for the eight hundred courtiers and two hundred staff in fifteen kitchens. As we wandered through the kitchens we noticed changes in the design of the fireplaces, as new ideas came in. In Tudor times six tons of logs were burnt each day.

Rather weary at this point, we thanked John to make our way to the tea room. However, John ran after us to say that King Henry and his new bride Kathryn Parr were in Clock Court. As it is the 500th year since Henry came to the throne, actors recreate his last wedding day. We saw the 'Royal Procession' and heard Henry's speech, in which he looked forward to founding a dynasty which would rule England for the next five hundred years!

I think we were all surprised to find parts of the Palace that we had not explored before. It was an interesting and enjoyable day. I was sorry that we were unable to visit Mary II's apartments or the Georgian rooms, but I was glad to go home at 6.00pm even though it was pouring with rain!

*Sylvia Ladyman*

### **Foundling and Dickens Museums - 5 September**

Twenty seven members of the Society met to visit the Foundling Museum in Brunswick Square. In the early 1720s Thomas Coram a retired shipwright who was horrified by the many young children abandoned in London, resolved to open a Foundling Hospital. It took seventeen years to raise the funds and the Hospital opened in 1741.

On the ground floor of the museum you can follow the story of the Foundling Hospital. Philanthropy, art and music was brought together to care for abandoned children. Hogarth pictures show the conditions in which poor people lived, children scavenging for food in the streets, neglected by their gin sodden parents. Pictures painted by Emma King show life in the Hospital – babies being baptised and renamed, a sick room, and a child leaving for an apprenticeship.

The children were educated and trained, finally leaving the care of the Hospital at the age of twenty one years. William Hogarth persuaded a number of his contemporaries such as Gainsborough and Reynolds to donate paintings and other works of art for display, making the Foundling Hospital the country's first public Art Gallery, which later led to the foundation of The Royal Academy in 1768.

There are impressive period features from the original Hospital building. A Court Room is one of the best surviving Rococo interiors in Britain. The top floor contains a display relating to the life and work of Handel who conducted regular benefit performances of the Messiah in the Hospital chapel.

After lunch, a ten minute walk took us to the **Charles Dickens Museum** in Doughty Street. The recently married Dickens moved into this house in a new gated road affording him a peaceful atmosphere. He remained there for two and a half years, leaving when he had three children. The house has three floors and a basement which contains a library, in what was the kitchen, containing different editions, translations and adaptations of Dickens work. A half hour video is usually shown in this room but not on the day of our visit, which was a special events day including readings from Dickens books and talks on the author. Instead we were given free audio players which described in more detail the contents of the various rooms.

In the hall there is preserved the garret window from ten year old Dickens bedroom in 16 Baylam Street, and the Marshalsea grille from the debtors' prison where Dickens father was incarcerated. In the rooms were family portraits and photographs. Dickens liked to entertain family and influential friends in the small dining room. His invitation would include details of what they would eat at the meal. The drawing room on the first floor has been redecorated and furnished as it would have been in Dickens time, rather gaudy but typical of early Victorian middle class. There were small reproductions of portraits of Dickens taken almost every year throughout his adult life. Interesting to see his dapper hair and beard styles.

48 Doughty Street was bought by the Dickens Fellowship in 1924; much of the original interior woodwork, plasterwork and fireplaces have not required reconstruction. The museum also owns 49 Doughty Street using some rooms as a supplementary archive library and research room, open by appointment.

Sylvia provided us with a full and interesting day.

*Denise Shackell*