

**MID-WARWICKSHIRE ASSOCIATION
of the NATIONAL TRUST**

Spring 2017

No. 89



Helping to keep Snowdonia beautiful

The Mid-Warwickshire Association has donated £500 to the National Trust's Snowdonia Appeal in order to support its vital conservation work.

Image / Paul Harris

**THE NATIONAL TRUST
MID-WARWICKSHIRE ASSOCIATION**

*A Voluntary Association of
National Trust Members*

PRESIDENT
Sir Edmund Fairfax-Lucy

VICE PRESIDENT Graham E. Cooper

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN: Norman Pratt Tel: 425639

VICE CHAIRMAN: Vacant

HON. SECRETARY: Julia Johnstone Tel: 424841
57 Almond Avenue, Leamington Spa CV32 6QD

HON. TREASURER: Marianne Pitts Tel: 885532

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Valerie Grimmer Tel: 492226
62 Foxes Way, Warwick, CV34 6AY

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Chris Rhodes Tel: 330057
chriscdmrhodes@aol.com

PROGRAMME SECRETARY: Vacancy

PRESS & PUBLICITY: Marianne Pitts Tel: 885532

WEBSITE: Jill Rooney

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Margaret Tomlinson, Richard Munday

THE CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It is now over a year since we began to plan the move of our meetings to Kingsley School. There were inevitably some minor problems but with the assistance of Kingsley Staff these were resolved, and although the seating does not match that of the Spa Centre it is a small price to pay for the significant reduction in the cost of hiring the Hall.

The Forty Fourth Annual General Meeting of the Association was held in November and was very well attended. It was pleasing that our President, Sir Edmund Fairfax-Lucy was able to be present this year. All the Officers were re- elected with the exception of Nan and Gerald Rooney. For personal reasons Nan felt she could no longer continue as the Association's Programme Secretary, a position she has held for a number of years and has done a wonderful job in finding us first class Speakers for our meetings. Both Nan and Gerald deserve our thanks for all their hard work they have given to the Association. I am, however, pleased to say that Nan has agreed to give any support needed to her replacement, and as you can see from your Oakleaves, has already provided Speakers well into 2017.

Unfortunately, the very important position of Programme Secretary is now vacant, and I would urge anyone who feel they could fill this post to contact the Secretary. It also means there are vacancies on the Committee and again please contact the Secretary.

Soon after the AGM we held the annual Luncheon, and unfortunately it was poorly attended. This is disappointing and it is hoped next year Members will support this very informal and pleasant occasion.

Financially the Association is in a sound position and this is in no small part due to the efficient management of the finances by Marianne Pitts, our Treasurer. The deficit for the year was due to our donations to the National Trust being greater than the year's income, but with our strong reserves and the move to Kingsley School, the Committee felt that the Association could afford to be generous. The greatly reduced cost of hiring a venue for our meetings arising from the transfer to Kingsley School will provide us with additional funds to increase our donations to other National Trust projects. Our membership remains fairly steady and leaflets giving the benefits of being a member of this Association have now been distributed to other National Trust properties, libraries, etc. It is hoped this will not only bring the Association's presence to a wider audience and by doing so increase its membership.

Last year Members were provided with excellent Speakers and visits to some very beautiful and interesting National Trust properties. This coming season also promises to be as good if not better, and I hope Members will give their support as they have done in the past.

Norman Pratt

Chairman

HOW OUR MONEY IS SPENT: THE NEW ORCHARD AT BADDESLEY CLINTON

We have recently commissioned a Garden Conservation Plan at Baddesley to help us transform the gardens back to a more traditional state. The plan is now in its final stages of completion. Previously, there hasn't been a plan and the garden has suffered from a lack of consensus on how best to present and manage it. The mansion has a well-documented history, but the garden's history is more elusive.

When the Trust took over in 1980, the gardens were in a simplified state. Subsequent work in the gardens has concentrated on creating an attractive garden for visitors to enjoy, rather than one based on a measure of historical accuracy.

Located to the south-west of the house, the Warwickshire meadow lies on land sloping gently down to the Great Pool. Mown grass paths lead visitors around and through the meadow on their way to the lakeside walk. It was created by Thomas Weaving Ferrers- Walker in the 1950s to safeguard local wildflower varieties and provide a habitat for wildlife.

This area was originally an orchard and there are some pear trees growing along the eastern edge. There are references to orchards at Baddesley dating back to the 15th century. It is possible that Edward Ferrers created it in early 18th century. An 1848 map shows this area as a distinct enclosure described as 'orchard' but cultivated as meadow. Maps from the late 19th and early 20th century show orchard trees growing in this area.



As part of our Garden Conservation Plan, we're excited to have the chance to recreate the orchard, with the trees planted amongst the meadow grasses. Planting started in early 2016 with mixed fruit trees, including many local varieties from Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. We anticipate approximately 65 trees will be planted over the next five years.

Each tree, including the guard to keep the rabbits away, will cost £150. **The Mid Warwickshire NT Association has kindly donated £1,500**, which will allow us to plant a further 10 trees this year. The conservation work we do within our historic houses and gardens would not be possible without donations such as yours and **we at Baddesley are extremely grateful that you have chosen to support our work in the Orchard this year.**

If you would like any further information about the project, please contact us by calling 01564

783294 or by e-mailing baddeslyclinton@nationaltrust.org.uk

Lisa Parry. *Image Mark Painting*

National Trust Mid-Warwickshire Association website

As some of you may be aware, a National Trust Mid-Warwickshire Association website has been set up - <http://nationaltrustmidwarks.org.uk/>. The Programme of Events, latest and past newsletters, our Constitution and useful links to other local places of historical interest can all be found here. Please do go and have a look. If there is anything you would like to see on the website that is not already there, please let us know by emailing us at ntmidwarks@gmail.com

Digital Newsletter Option

We would like to offer members the option of receiving their newsletter digitally. If you would like to receive your newsletter by email in future, please email us at ntmidwarks@gmail.com and we will get this set up for you.

WANTED

I am hoping to start sharing the duties of editor of this newsletter. A familiarity with the Word software is recommended. If you are interested, please contact me for an informal chat on 01926 330057, or at chriscdmrhodes@aol.com.

EXCURSIONS 2017

Bookings for trips will be dealt with commencing three weeks after the distribution of this Oakleaves Magazine, and applications will be acknowledged from this date. If you do not hear from the organisers soon after this, please contact the telephone number on each booking form to check that your application has arrived. **The price of the excursion** includes the cost of coach travel, the driver's gratuity, the cost of any talk or guided tour and admission to properties which do not belong to the National Trust. **Please remember to bring your National Trust Membership Card for entry to NT properties.**

PLEASE NOTE: Excursions in this edition will depart from Tesco's car park* on the Emscote Road (instead of Newbold Comyn), with a **further pick-up ten minutes later at Newbold Terrace, opposite the Royal Spa Centre.**

*** On your way into Tesco's car park, the bus stop on your left is the one we will be using. Turn into the car park and immediately you will see fifteen parking bays on your left. Park there with your car facing the wall and fuel station. On your right you will see steps which will lead you up to our bus stop. It has been agreed that we are able to park there for the whole day.**

If, having paid for your excursion, you need to cancel, we suggest that it will be helpful if you are able to find someone else to take your place. The organisers may be able to assist with names and telephone numbers if there is a waiting list, but this cannot be guaranteed, nor can a refund, particularly if certain tickets have to be ordered and paid for well in advance.

The names of the volunteer organisers are on each booking form, so please make sure you address them correctly, but cheques still must be made out to **"MID WARWICKSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL TRUST"** and enclosed with your booking form, together with a stamped, addressed envelope.

Excursion to CHATSWORTH:
Tuesday 25th April 2017, leaving at 8.30am
Cost: £36 per person

<http://www.chatsworth.org/>
<http://www.chatsworth.org/plan-your-visit/chatsworth-map> is recommended

.. and I hope you have been inspired by Gill Wright's talk in December to visit this grand and beautiful House and Garden. There is a lot to see: Over 30 rooms with elegant interiors, one of Europe's most significant art collections and fascinating stories of 16 generations of the Cavendish family and 105 acres of gardens with miles of footpaths, giant water features, sculptures, and a maze; as well as the rose, cottage, sensory and kitchen gardens and magnificent views.

The Duke and Duchess of Devonshire charge for admission to the House and Garden so the cost is **£36 per person**. There are several restaurants and cafes for you to refresh yourselves but none is included in this price.

We will make an early start - 08:30 from Tesco's car park, 08:40 from the Spa Centre - as we have a long way to go. The trip each way is estimated at 3 hours, so we will have a break on the way there and back. We leave at 16:00, ETA in Leamington Spa 19:00

Organiser: Marianne Pitts – 01926 885532
Please use Booking Form A.

Excursion to AUDLEY END HOUSE AND GARDENS:
Thursday 11th May 2017, leaving at 8.30am
Cost: £32 per person

The history of Audley House dates back to the early 11th Century when Thomas Howard, the 1st Earl of Suffolk, took an earlier house on the site of Walden Abbey, owned by his grandfather, and rebuilt it on the scale of a royal palace. The last major works to the House took place in 1820 when the third Lord Braybrooke's aim was to restore its Jacobean character. In more recent times the House was requisitioned in 1941 to be the Polish Section of the Strategic Operations Executive. It was bought for the Nation in 1948.

The cost of the trip to NT Members including the cost of travel will be **£32 per person**. There are two Cafés on the site. Wheelchairs and mobility scooters are available but must be pre-booked by the Organiser. If anyone does need any special assistance, please let the Organiser know in advance.

The coach will leave Tesco's car park at 08:30, 08:40 from the Spa Centre and will arrive at Audley House at around 11:30. We will depart from Audley House at 16:00 arriving home at about 19:00. There will be a comfort stop during the journeys and the coach also has toilet facilities.

Organiser: Norman Pratt - 01926 425639
Please use Booking Form B. Please book by 20th April 2017

Excursion to HARLAXTON MANOR near Grantham:

Tuesday June 13th 2017, leaving at 9am

Cost: £32 per person

Harlaxton Manor was built in the 1830s for Gregory Gregory, a wealthy Nottinghamshire businessman. The architect was Anthony Salvin and Harlaxton must be regarded as his masterpiece. Built in Ancaster stone, it is an exuberant merging of Gothic, Jacobean and Baroque styles creating a towering façade of dramatic impact. After Salvin completed the exterior the interior was largely designed by William Burn in the Baroque style, and includes the magnificent Cedar Staircase. The house is now owned by the University of Evansville Indiana, USA, and is used as their British Campus and is rarely opened to the public.

We leave Tesco's car park at 09:00 or 09:10 from the Spa Centre and hope to arrive in Grantham, the birthplace of Margaret Thatcher, at about 11:15 to enable you to get some lunch (not included). The church of St Wulfram has the highest spire (282ft) of any medieval church in the country and its chained Library is also worth a visit. At 13:15 we reboard the coach for the short trip to Harlaxton for a guided tour of the house at 14:00 followed by refreshments (included in the cost). After that there will be time to explore the gardens and we will leave for Leamington at 16:30. The cost will be **£32 per person**.

ETA back in Leamington 18.30.

Organiser: Richard Munday – 01926 853116

Please use Booking Form C.

Visit BY OWN TRANSPORT to TEMPLE BALSALL:

Wednesday 21st June 2017 at 1pm for 1.30pm

Cost: £14 per person

Visit to the Foundation of Lady Katherine Leveson - Temple Balsall. 13:00 for 13:30
Cost **£14 per person** including afternoon tea and a donation to the Foundation.

The visit will start with a talk by the Vicar, Rev. Kathy Lloyd Roberts, who will talk about the history of the Knights Templar, why they were founded, their demise and successors. We will look at the Church and learn the history of the Foundation.

Afternoon tea is included in the price and this will consist of sandwiches, scones with jam and cream, and home-made cakes. There is not too much walking, but if it is a nice day there are some lovely walks within easy reach.

Directions: Follow the A452 to Balsall Common and at the first cross roads turn left on to the B4101 signposted Knowle and Temple Balsall. After three miles look for the sign of the Lady Leveson Primary School and turn left. The car park is the first turning on the left. There will be someone there to direct you to the hall.

As car parking is very limited, it would be helpful if members would share.

Organiser: Nan Rooney - 01926 430701 or 07747 134437 (daytime only)

Please use Booking Form D.

Excursion to GRIMSTHORPE CASTLE, Lincolnshire:

Wednesday 5th July 2017, leaving at 8.15am

Cost: £38 per person

Grimsthorpe Castle is a hidden gem, built for a King and set in 3,000 acres of parkland. There are five different areas of formal gardens, including a rose parterre and ornamental kitchen garden. On arrival, there will be a comfort break with coffee/tea and biscuits provided before we rejoin our coach, where we will be greeted by our guide, Ray. He will tell us about the history and take us on a tour of the parkland where we can enjoy the magnificent trees, some of which are 600 years old, and the deer park.

We return to the castle where we will have a room specially for us to have a light lunch together, which is included in the price. After lunch, there will be a guided tour of the castle, which dates from the Tudor period. There are magnificent state rooms, tapestries, furniture, paintings and an unusual collection of thrones. We will then be free to explore on our own. There is a gift shop with an eclectic mix of local produce from the area, including local beer!

Tickets are priced at **£38 per person**, which includes coach travel, refreshments on arrival, tour of the grounds, light lunch, entrance and tour of the castle.

Coach will depart Tesco's car park at 08:15 (please note early departure) 08:25 at The Spa Centre, arriving at Grimsthorpe Castle (traffic allowing) at 10:30, with departure from the castle at 16:30 eta Leamington 18:30.

Organisers: Carol Andrews - 01926 831737 and Beryl Broadbent - 01926 332194

Please use Booking Form E.

Visit BY OWN TRANSPORT to the SALTISFORD CANAL, WARWICK:

Wednesday 19th July 2017 at 2.30 pm

Cost: £8 per person

The Saltisford Canal Trust Ltd is a small canal charity set up 30 years ago to restore the Saltisford Canal Arm, which dates back to 1799, and is originally the terminus of the Warwick and Birmingham Canal. The Saltisford Canal Centre has been transformed into a collection of interesting buildings, both new and old, set in a garden and orchard, with a substantial car park. It is home to a number of residential narrow boats and also provides temporary mooring within a 10 minute walk of the heart of Warwick.

There is a visitor centre, shop and the Cedar Room where we shall be having tea, with a sensory garden where one may sit and enjoy the surroundings and wild life.

We meet at Saltisford at 14:30. Tea will be served a little later and Alan Lorentzen, one of the Trustees, will be giving a talk about the Canal. There will be an opportunity to explore the wharf and facilities. Places at **£8 per person** are available by completing and submitting the enclosed application form before 7th July. The Canal Trust (postal code CV34 5RJ) is accessed from the A425 Birmingham Road, going out of Warwick on the left along Budbrooke Road, just before the Warwick Bypass A46 roundabout.

Organiser: Graham E. Cooper - 01926 426942

Please use Booking Form F. Please book by 7th July 2017

**Excursion to HUGHENDEN MANOR, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE:
Thursday 17th August 2017, leaving at 9.15am
Cost: £20 per person**

Hughenden Manor, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, was the home of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield. This handsome home, set in an unspoilt Chiltern Valley with its views of rolling hills, is full of personal memorabilia of this charismatic statesman. During the Second World War, the house was the headquarters for a top-secret operation and a separate exhibition reflects those times.

Our coach will be leaving Tesco's car park at 09:15, with a separate pick-up at the Spa Centre at 09:25 and we expect to arrive at Hughenden at 11:15. When we shall be greeted with tea/coffee and biscuits and a short introductory talk. The Stables Café is available for those who wish to purchase lunch. We shall be leaving at 16:00. with estimated time of arrival back in Leamington at 18:00.

The cost of the visit is £20. It is anticipated that all in our party will be National Trust members, but **to a non-member, the cost would be £30.**

Organiser: Graham E. Cooper - 01926 426942
Please use Booking Form G. Please book by 4th August 2017

NEWS from our local NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTIES

Details are correct as we go to print, but it is advisable to check before making a special journey.

BADDESLEY CLINTON:

Last winter Baddesley Clinton began its two year conservation project which kicked off the rather large task of re-wiring the rooms, fitting new fire alarms and replacing some parts of the plumbing. This winter it has been time to conserve the rest of the house! It's an expensive job and the two phases together cost around £270,000; that's the equivalent to selling 540,000 postcards, 150,000 cups of tea or 4,285 annual memberships!

From 30th January to May only **half of the house** will be open for visitors to enjoy. If you'd like to know a little bit more about the project there are information boards in the car park hut, or pop into the housekeeper's room when the house is re-opened as information on the project will be displayed there too.

Our Cadbury Easter Hunts will be taking place from Friday 14th – Monday 17th April, 11am - 4pm and it's a great opportunity to get all the family together for an egg hunt around the grounds. **This Easter weekend you will only be able to visit us if you have pre-booked a ticket.** This will enable us to regulate numbers, ensure everyone has an enjoyable visit and help us to look after Baddesley. Booking will be available from 1st February

PACKWOOD HOUSE:

Join us for a guided wildlife walk at Packwood every Wednesday from January - March with one of our resident wildlife enthusiasts. Come and get to know what birds and wildlife can be found in the woodland here at Packwood and learn to identify different types of bird song from our resident and migrating birds.

Grab those wellies, binoculars and cameras and head out into the great outdoors to discover what wildlife can be found chirping in the hedgerows, soaring overhead or lurking under logs on one of our wildlife walks. There is a huge amount of wildlife waiting to be discovered from tree creepers to nuthatches, red wings to jack daws and we've even spotted (and heard) a greater spotted woodpecker.

Our Cadbury Easter Hunts will be taking place from Friday 14th – Monday 17th April, 11am - 4pm and it's a great opportunity to get all the family together for an egg hunt around the grounds. **This Easter weekend you will only be able to visit us if you have pre-booked a ticket.** This will enable us to regulate numbers, ensure everyone has an enjoyable visit and help us to look after Packwood House. Booking will be available from 1st February.

Packwood's contemporary mingled style garden, with herbaceous borders, wildflower meadows and beautiful orchard is the perfect place to watch the seasons change. Search for snowdrops, daffodils and bluebells in spring and enjoy an array of heady scented roses and towering alliums in summer.

COUGHTON COURT:

In August 2016 we began the fourth stage of our major conservation project. This final stage of the project includes the rewiring of the rooms, the installation of a new fire alarm, and some bits of plumbing, which will ensure that the house meets industry standards, helping to secure the future safety of Coughton Court.

Once the North Wing is completed, in March 2018, we will have finished the conservation project here at Coughton – a project that began with the Gatehouse, back in 2012.

It is the eventual aim of both the National Trust and the Throckmorton Family to put as many items from the North Wing on display to our visitors as possible, by placing them in open rooms, and opening up our store rooms during the project. This is an exciting opportunity to show items that have never been on display before. We're able to fund crucial work like this thanks to supporters like you giving through membership, admissions, the restaurant and shop, and donations.

We have teamed up with Cadburys again this year for a fun filled event with chocolate treats, take home activities and a trail around the grounds for everyone to enjoy. Our Cadbury Easter Hunts will be taking place from Friday 14th – Monday 17th April, 11am - 4pm and it's a great opportunity to get all the family together for an egg hunt around the grounds. This Easter weekend you will only be able to visit us if you have pre-booked a ticket. This will enable us to regulate numbers, ensure everyone has an enjoyable visit and help us to look after Coughton Court. Booking will be available from 1st February.

Our increasingly popular Jigsaw Festival will be returning next year from Wednesday 19th April – Sunday 23rd April, 11am - 5pm. Set against the beautiful backdrop of Coughton hundreds of jigsaws, in a variety of themes and sizes, will be available for visitors to buy in a constantly

changing display. If you have any jigsaws taking up precious space in your cupboards and you'd like to play a vital part in conserving this beautiful house and its contents for future generations, we'd love to take them off your hands!

UPTON HOUSE

Upton House marks its 90th anniversary year.

Visitors to Upton House & Gardens from 25th March 2017 will see a new transformation to mark the date the house was bought by 2nd Viscount Bearsted, in March 1927. Visitors will be invited to come to a very special house viewing – just as the Lord and Lady Bearsted did 90 years ago. Upton had great potential but was in need of modernisation.

Visitors will follow the renovations and witness the before and after as the Bearsteds create a made to measure family home, fit to showcase Lord Bearsted's world class art collection. His passion for paintings meant he filled his home, gallery style and showed works by Bosch, Stubbs, El Greco; as well as fine porcelain. There will be interesting exhibitions along the route exploring the history of the era and the fashionable trends of the day.

And of course, every ideal home needs a spectacular feature garden. Lady Bearsted's passion for plants bloomed as she planned new borders and helped design some of the garden architectural features. There are with early spring bulbs, lavish herbaceous planting and thriving kitchen garden to explore throughout the year in the gardens.

The new presentation will launch 90 years to the day when Lord Bearsted bought the house, and continue to showcase his wonderful art collection and tell the fascinating stories of the life of a millionaire in the early 20th century.

CHARLECOTE PARK

Hidden Charlotte – Inside the Summer House

Each Wednesday from 1st March until 5th April. 11am – 3pm

Ever wondered what the inside of the summerhouse at Charlecote looks like? This is an opportunity to see inside the charming little playhouse, built for Mary Elizabeth's grandchildren in the late 1880s.

Free of charge/normal admission applies

Four Centuries Book Talk

8th March, 12 - 3pm

Find out why Charlecote has one of the best libraries in the Trust with this talk, covering four centuries of books from the Lucy family collection. See some of our books up close and off of the shelf and end the afternoon with a hot drink.

£10 Booking essential

Event repeated on other dates, 22nd March, 3rd May, 17th May

Spring has Sprung

6th April, 11am - 1pm

How has nature transformed the park and gardens since the turn of the new year? Join our rangers to find out and explore the beautiful landscape. Enjoy a hot drink to cap it all off.

£10 Booking essential

Easter at Charlecote

8th – 12th April / 19th – 23rd April

Get outside this Easter break and take the opportunity to cross off some more of those '50 things to do before you're 11¾.' There'll also be some fun craft activities to get stuck into as well.

Easter at Charlecote – Cadbury Trail

13th – 18th April

Explore the parkland at Charlecote with our Cadbury Easter trail. Follow the trail to discover some interesting facts about the property and pick up a scrummy Cadbury prize at the end.

£3 per Trail.

Mid- Warwickshire Association of the National Trust

A date for your diary

14th October 2017

Autumn Luncheon and Speaker. Details to be announced

EVENING MEETINGS Spring 2017 - Autumn 2017

*Our meetings will be held on Monday evenings, normally the **first Monday of the month**, at The Kingsley School. **Guests are welcome. The admission price for non-members of the Association is £3***

6th February 2017 Helen Larner The Language of Flowers

With the help of slides, we shall discover the symbolic meaning of flowers from the Ancient World to the Victorians.

6th March 2017 Steffie Shields Moving Heaven and Earth: Capability Brown

The life and work of Capability Brown- his natural style of landscape creation and his architecture. This will include some of Brown's work in this area.

3rd April 2017 Malcolm Kenwood Art Beat

An autobiographical journey from rural beat officer in the late 1970s, culminating as a specialist art and antiques detective. Tales of the criminal art underworld, their origins and methods,

8th May 2017 Dianne Mannering Born to Rule

There have been 42 monarchs since William the Conqueror. Of these, 12 died unnatural deaths. A light hearted look at the Conqueror's descendants and how they came to wear the crown – or not!

2nd October 2017 Graham Short The Hands of Genius

How Graham, from very unlikely beginnings, developed the art of micro-carving. He has engraved The Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin. His client list includes the Royal Family.

6th November 2017 Julie Ann Cooper The Story of Edith Cavell

Edith Cavell was a nurse in the 1st World War - she nursed both sides, was accused of being a spy and was unlawfully shot by the Germans.

VISITING HISTORIC HOMES IN THE USA

My wife and I have made several trips to the USA and try to visit at least one historic home on each trip. It is interesting to compare our overall experience with that of visiting National Trust properties in this country.

There is no exact US equivalent to the National Trust. Most of the properties date, of course, from the late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They tend to be looked after, and looked after very well, by local organisations such as The Preservation Society of Newport County, or by a trust as The Lincoln Family Home at Hildene, or by an individual Foundation.

Many have the “upstairs-downstairs” feel of an English country house, with miles of corridors, steep staircases and attic bedrooms for the hidden army of servants.



Many UK Properties offer an aural tour of the house. Most US Properties offer the same facility. The Breakers, [named after the Atlantic waves, not men with sledge hammers], offers two or three extras in each room. At the end of the standard aural commentary, the listener has several options: “Press 1 to enter the next room, press 2 for more information about the portraits, press three for a diary account of a grand dinner eaten in the room in 1908” etc.

This adds greatly to the quality of the visit, and can be used according to one’s level of interest.

The Breakers, the summer “cottage” of the Vanderbilt family, offered its guests something I have never seen before: **four taps for each bath.**



The reason? Hot and cold running fresh water, and hot and cold running sea water for that healthy early morning bath.

The contrast between the classes is greater in the grand plantation homes of Louisiana where the slave quarters provide a stark contrast with the opulence only a few metres away.



We stayed on one cotton Plantation, sleeping in one of the house's several guest rooms. Early morning tea was served in bed on a silver tray. Breakfast was at the main dining room, and offered a real "Southern" menu including grits [boiled ground corn] and biscuits [with optional bacon and gravy]. We had to be clear of the table by 9.30 so that the dining room could be tidied ready for the first day visitors at 10.00.



Some historic homes are named as a **National Historic Landmark**. This is a building, a site, structure, object, or district that is officially recognized by the United States government for its outstanding historical significance. Of over 85,000 places listed on the country's National Register of Historic Places, only some 2500 are recognized as National Historic Landmarks. Prior to 1935, only piecemeal efforts were made by the United States Congress to preserve sites of national and cultural importance. In 1935, Congress passed the Historic Sites Act, which gave the Interior Secretary authority to formally record and organize historic properties.

National Historic Landmarks are designated by the United States Secretary of the Interior because they are: sites where events of national historical significance occurred; places where prominent persons lived or worked; icons of ideals that shaped the nation; outstanding examples of design or construction; places characterizing a way of life; or archaeological sites able to yield information.

Sources: *The Properties mentioned & image 4; text and images 1- 3 C Rhodes; images 5-7 Wikipedia*

The Massacre of the Innocents

Attributed to Jan Brueghel sometime after 1567



*Herod then with fear was filled "A Prince", he
said "In Jewry?" All the little boys he slew
In Bethl'hem in his fury"*

Only the picture is not Bethlehem – it is a Flemish village, familiar to all Breughel's contemporaries, on a bitter cold bright winter morning with snow on the ground and a frozen pond. Mothers and fathers are standing pleading and begging for mercy; children are being checked for gender, stabbed by the soldiers and lying dead on the ground, or on their mother's lap. A troop of soldiers in the background are under the recognizable control of the hated Duke of Alva, sent to the Low Countries in 1567 by Philip II of Spain to eradicate the heresy of Protestantism. This is a political picture of a biblical atrocity and tragedy in "modern dress", originally painted by Pieter Breughel the elder in 1567.

The original is in the Queen's collection and the dead and dying babies have been overpainted as bags of grain and bundles: looting rather than murdering. Shortly after its creation, the painting came into the possession of the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II in Prague - it is thought that his Roman Catholic sensitivities caused the alterations to be made. The Upton picture is much smaller and varies in one particular: right, front, a small child is running towards us, escaping the carnage.

The picture, attributed to Jan Breughel, was bought by Lord Bearsted sometime pre 1923. Jan was Pieter's younger and more gifted son and, although he was not a renowned copyist, some of his creations resembled his father's works. As a valuable item, during WWII, it was sent for protection with National Gallery pictures to Wales.

The wooden panel was cracked and the paint was flaking when the National Trust decided to have it professionally cleaned and conserved in 2010. We (the Mid Warks Association) helped to pay for this. While the picture was out of its frame, it was subjected to infra-red, X-ray and dendrochronological (= tree ring) research in England and art-historical investigation in Brussels. The results of the cleaning and conservation are beautiful. Old brown varnish has been replaced so that the sky is blue and the snow is white and all the colours are vivid; all the cracks have disappeared. The Brussels institutes are not convinced it is a Breughel: it may be an 18th copy commissioned by a famous art collector of the time whose crest appears on one of the gables on the right, although this may also be a later overpainting.

We may not know whether this has been painted by Jan Breughel or A.N. Other, but the picture is moving and beautiful and its rescue was a good use of our funds.
Marianne Pitts