



The Worshipful Company of Educators The Master's Weekend, 2017

2.00pm Friday 12 May to 1.00pm Sunday 14 May 2017

Discover the County of Squires and Spires

Weekend in the historical and picturesque countryside of Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire, with its great churches and houses, its placid landscapes and its stone villages, deserves to be far more widely known. Its position, straddling half of England, has meant that lines of communication have always passed through it, from ancient tracks like the Welsh Lane and Roman Watling Street to the Grand Union Canal, the railways and the M1. So many pass through it, but few bother to tarry. As a result, this county of wooded hills – many with the steeple of an ancient church thrusting up between the trees – of villages, churches and country houses built of stone of many colours from dark brown ironstone to golden yellow limestone is less regarded than it should be. Yet it sits at the very heart of England, stretching from the Fens in the North-East to the fringes of the Cotswolds in the South-West, and boasts a rich historical heritage. “It is truly the heart of England’s countryside – our great collective masterpiece.” (Sir Andrew Motion)

Accommodation

We will be staying at Highgate House, Creaton which, set in 26 acres of gardens and grounds, dates back to the seventeenth century with impressive Victorian additions. Today it is a well-regarded hotel and conference centre with a range of single and double bedrooms. There are various health and sports facilities and a swimming-pool. Our dinners will be served in one of the appropriate private dining rooms, and Highgate House has a well-deserved reputation for its catering, specialising in modern English and Continental cuisine. This should prove an excellent base for our weekend.



Courtesy of Highgate House

Location

Some ten miles north of Northampton, within easy reach of both the M1 and A14, and of the railway station in Northampton on the line from London Euston to Birmingham (and from which transport will be provided).

We will be based in the central belt of Northamptonshire – the heart of the Pytchley Hunt country. Rolling, well-fenced grassland, which has changed little since Whyte-Melville described it in the 1920s:

*“I’ll show you a country which none can surpass,
With acres of woodland and oceans of grass.”*

This is a landscape formed by hunting. A landscape punctuated by the spires for which the county is famous, making it an obvious choice for some of the earliest steeplechases. It characterises the Northamptonshire landscape – open, rolling and quintessentially English.

The Theme of the Weekend

Against this background, there will be an opportunity to get to know this largely unknown and unspoilt countryside, both by coach and car and on foot, to visit sites of both architectural and historical interest, to explore one of the finest gardens created in the last century, and finally to enjoy good food and good wines, here in the heart of this county in the heart of England.

The Programme

Friday 12 May

Check-in at the Hotel from 2.00pm onwards.

The Weekend will formally begin with Afternoon Tea at Highgate House, taken in the Chudley Room, from 3.00pm to 5.00pm; last orders at 4.30pm.

After taking tea, those who wish, and weather permitting, may engage in a variety of games in the hotel grounds or utilise the swimming pool.

At 6.15pm, in the Annerley Room, we will be joined by a speaker to give us a light-hearted introduction to the county.

At 7.30pm we will take dinner in the Chudley Room; attire smart casual.

Saturday 13 May

After breakfast, taken from 7.30am to 8.45am, we will set out by coach at 9.00am for a short drive to Brixworth for our first stop and guided tour.

All Saints Brixworth is an outstanding church; one of the grandest examples of Anglo-Saxon architecture in England, some might say Europe. Started in the 8th century, it was altered later in the Anglo-Saxon period. With an external length of about 148 feet and an internal width of 30 feet across the nave, the church surpasses in size all other surviving Anglo-Saxon churches in England. It follows the design of the early Christian basilicas, and was built originally of re-used Roman bricks from local villas and further afield, and these can still be seen in some of the arches of the nave.

One of Brixworth's most interesting features is its ambulatory, or sunken passage, which ran around the outside of the apse. It was discovered and excavated in the nineteenth century, and originally had a vaulted roof and was entered from inside the church. It was probably built in the eighth century, for pilgrims viewing relics set in the apse wall, and is thus earlier than most known continental examples. Set on an escarpment of the limestone ridge that runs through the length of the county, the late medieval tower and spire command impressive views of the territory of the Pytchley Hunt that stretches north to the valley of the Welland and the Leicestershire border.

After this visit, a short trip across the valley will bring us to Coton Manor.

The comparative lack of large, public and well-known gardens in Northamptonshire is more than made up for by the quality of the ones that there are. And one of the smaller but very special ones is at Coton Manor, the home of the Pasley-Tylers for two generations. The

house, which dates from the mid-seventeenth century, is of local brown ironstone, and stands near the road above the gardens. The horticultural skill of both the late Haroldine Pasley-Tyler, and her daughter-in-law Susie, in putting plants happily together are legendary, so this garden attracts connoisseurs of a very English style of country gardening. They come for the spring bulbs, roses, and many herbaceous plants, not to mention the flamingos in the stream at the bottom of the garden, the misty beauty of the Bluebell Wood close-by, and the famous Garden School, where well-known experts give talks to amateur gardeners. Over coffee we will be introduced to the gardens, and then at our leisure enjoy the gardens. The owners will be on hand to answer any questions.

Afterwards, we will make our way back to Highgate House for a buffet lunch at 1.00pm served in the Terrace restaurant.

This will end the formal part of today's programme, and come mid-afternoon there will be time for individual choice, but with many suggestions as to possibilities that may be of interest:

- Market Harborough – for those wishing to go shopping: designer clothes shops, boutiques and cafés.
- Foxton Locks – for those interested in industrial archaeology: the longest flight of staircase locks on the English canal system, along with an inclined plane built in 1900 and a museum.
- The Brampton Valley Heritage Train Line.
- Country Houses – details will be provided of, along with directions to, country houses in the neighbourhood that are open.
- Churches – some suggested tours of different churches in the area.
- Walks – three walks of differing lengths will be available.

Information on these will be provided at a later date.

We shall foregather back at Highgate House for drinks and dinner.

7.00pm Drinks reception in the Drawing Room, kindly hosted by the Master.

7.30pm Dinner in the Baronial Hall; attire black tie. We shall be joined by the H.M.Lord - Lieutenant of Northamptonshire and his wife.

Sunday 14 May

Leaving Highgate House, after breakfast, at 9.00am, we will travel by coach to visit the site of the Battle of Naseby, where an expert will describe the course of the conflict which, in June 1645, essentially decided the outcome of the Civil War. Here the opposing armies of the Royalists and Parliamentarians drew up facing one another. At first the battle, which consisted mainly of hand-to hand fighting, went in favour of the Royalists, with Prince Rupert sweeping all before him on the right wing, but the Parliamentary reinforcements

finally decided the issue, and though the King escaped, he lost much of his army. Naseby Field has, of course, been enclosed since the battle; otherwise it has changed little, and one can still see the dip in the ground where much of the fighting took place.

We will then move across some beautiful countryside to Kelmarsh Hall, where we shall have coffee/biscuits on arrival.

This is an important Georgian house, but it is especially interesting as an early example of the work of the interior designer, Nancy Lancaster. Built in 1732 to a James Gibbs design, Kelmarsh Hall is surrounded by its working estate, grazed parkland and beautiful gardens. In 1928 Ronald and Nancy Tree rented the Palladian house from the Lancaster family and decorated the rooms in the manner that has become known as the English Country House style. In the 1950s she returned to Kelmarsh as Nancy Lancaster and continued to develop her style both in the house and the garden. The latter includes a stunning triangular walled garden. The house itself contains the fabulous Croome Collection of eighteenth century furniture, paintings and porcelain. We will be shown around on a private tour which will bring to life the history of the occupants as well as the contents of the house.

The coach will return us to Highgate House for approximately 12.45pm.

This will conclude the formal programme for the weekend.

Information will be provided about local pubs for lunch.

If you wish to take lunch at Highgate House, then please note that the Hotel has to be informed by Thursday 11 May.

And some may wish to drive over to Althorp to continue the week-end, with a tour of the venue. Travel directions will be provided during the week-end.

Althorp has been the home of the Spencer family for 500 years. The House was originally built in 1508, but was significantly re-faced and re-modelled in the eighteenth century. It contains one of the finest private collections of art, furniture and ceramics in the world, including numerous paintings by Rubens, Reynolds, Stubbs, Gainsborough and Van Dyck. Visitors are shown round the House on guided tours. Set within 550 acres of walled parkland, the gardens, including the Round Oval Lake, are open to visitors. The Stables Block, built by Roger Morris in 1732, is in the Anglo-Palladian style. Refreshments are available in the Café and there is the new Spencer Exhibition, which explores how the Spencer family has shaped the estate and its treasures.

Nearby is the delightful estate village of Great Brington where the church of St Mary contains the Spencer Chapel with the outstanding family funerary monuments of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

From here it is a short and easy journey back to the M1 or to the railway station in Northampton.

Costs

Sharing a double room-£310 per person

Single room-£370

Comprising:

Friday-Bed and Breakfast accommodation, afternoon tea, a drink with the talk, dinner with half bottle of wine.

Saturday-Bed and Breakfast accommodation, coach travel, entry charges to venues with tea/coffee biscuits, buffet lunch, drinks reception, dinner with half bottle of wine.

Sunday-Coach travel, entry charges to venues with tea/coffee biscuits.

No payments are required at this stage.

Method of payments will be advised to successful applicants after the closing date.

Please complete the booking form below.

BOOKING FORM

Please complete the booking form and send it to

Chris Marshall, Renter Warden, The Worshipful Company of Educators,

43 Scotland Road, Buckhurst Hill ,Essex IG9 5NP

Closing date Tuesday 14 March 2017

Places filled as applications are received

All applications will be acknowledged

I am unable to accept bookings made by e-mail or by phone

I/We wish to attend the Master's week-end on 12-14 May 2017

Name(s)

.....
.....

Address and Post Code

.....
.....
.....

Telephone Number

.....

E-mail address for acknowledgement/confirmation of place(s)

.....

Please tick

Double room.....

Twin room.....

Single room.....

smg/7-15