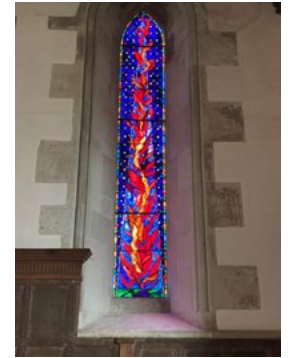


Last month's Outing to Hinton Ampner

Hinton Ampner began as a large Tudor manor believed to be constructed in the 1540's and was leased to Thomas Stewkeley in 1597. It eventually became uninhabitable due to loud noises, attributed to a poltergeist! It was replaced in 1793 by the existing mansion and updated by John Dutton in the Victorian period. He stipulated that there should be thirty bedrooms but no bathrooms as he once caught a cold in one!

His grandson Ralph, 8th Lord Sherborne, inherited the house in 1935, creating a new block on the west side and remodelled the whole building in the neo-Georgian style. The work reduced the overall number of rooms by ten, leaving the first floor with seven principal bedrooms and a generous supply of bathrooms!

During WWII the house accommodated 40 children from the Portsmouth Day School for Girls and only 48 hours' notice was given to clear the principal rooms for the arrival of 100 camp beds! The house was returned to Ralph in 1945 and a 15 year decorating programme started.



In April 1960 a terrible fire left just a blackened shell, with a few rescued items littered in front of it. However it was restored, using many items recycled from stately homes, including a Robert Adam ceiling and beautiful fireplaces, one of which is decorated with Napoleon's insignia. Other treasured collections include European paintings, furniture and ceramics.

Ralph had no direct heirs and gave the estate to the National Trust on his death in 1985. He is buried in the graveyard of the Saxon church within the grounds.

The house is surrounded by beautiful gardens with views over the South Downs, including an extensive walled garden with heritage apple and pear trees 150 years old, lovely floral displays and a variety of delicious produce.

An extensive tour of the gardens took us to the orchard, lily pond, the Dell and formal gardens which included a rose linked to the Procol Harum song, a Whiter Shade of Pale! An elegant temple is being restored and the North Drive features an urn overlooking the site of the Civil War Battle of Cheriton in 1534, which was won by the Parliamentarians against the Royalists.



There was so much to see and it was a thoroughly enjoyable day. Thank you Val for organising it.

Pam Booty