

A voluntary association of members established to promote the work of the National Trust
www.nts Sidmouth.org

It's nearly that time again. Yes, I'm talking about the Sidmouth Centre's Christmas lunch on Saturday 8th December. I know a lot of you have booked for this and we look forward to seeing you there. We will gather at the Belmont Hotel from 12.15pm where you will be greeted with a glass of prosecco or juice before moving in to lunch at 1.00pm. Mmmmm, hungry already!

Whether you can join us on 8th or not, all the Committee wish our members the very best of Christmases and a good New Year. Speaking of which, a preview of our 2019 programme follows below. We hope there is something to interest all of you.

----- **FORTHCOMING EVENTS** -----

Wednesday 23rd January, 2.30pm All Saints' Church Hall, Sidmouth. Talk "Across the USA by bicycle" with Stuart Woolger

When he is not to be found on a kibbutz, or trekking in the Himalayas, or being the guest of a Fijian chief, or otherwise travelling the world, Stuart Woolger lives in Exmouth. In this talk, he invites us to join him cycling across America, although he will be doing all the pedalling!

Wednesday 20th February, 2.30pm All Saints' Church Hall, Sidmouth. Talk "Saving Castle Drogo" with Paula Clarke

Castle Drogo has been undergoing a six year restoration project. Early in 2019 it will emerge from the scaffolding that has clothed it for so long to be seen again as good as new. Or better than new, in fact, as it will be the first time ever that the Castle has been watertight. Paula is the Community Engagement Officer for Castle Drogo and has been part of the team there for 13 years. She has spoken to us before and we very much look forward to welcoming her back as the project approaches its conclusion.



Later in 2019

On Wednesday 13th March, our annual Bob Symes Lecture will take place at the Manor Pavilion. This year the speaker will be Dr Roger Trend and his subject is "Rocks, Rivers and Coast: selected episodes from Sidmouth's deep past". Roger is a distinguished lecturer in education but has a strong interest in geology. He is the author of a book on the geology of Sidmouth.

Our first outing of the New Year will take place in April and is detailed below. The rest of our programme is well advanced and (although last minute changes can't be ruled out) we are expecting to offer trips to Sherborne Castle (8 May); Prideaux Place (11 June); the ever popular Greenway (9 July); Hardy country (8 August); Longleat (11 September); Arlington Court (8 October); and Knightshayes (25 November).

Full details and booking forms will be available in future Newsletters nearer the relevant dates.

Friday 5th April, Outing to Darts Farm and Topsham Museum



It's some months off but our first outing of 2019 features a visit to Topsham. We will begin this half-day outing by leaving The Triangle at 12.00 noon. First stop will be Darts Farm, which declares itself to be the best farm shop in the UK and who are we to argue? There you will be able to buy lunch as well as browse the shopping opportunities.

We then continue to Topsham, which was the principal port on the River Exe in Roman times and remained so for many centuries thereafter. A short walk from our drop off point, the Museum has a wonderful collection of marine related items as well as a selection of memorabilia relating to the actress Vivien Leigh. We will have a guided tour. The small size of the Museum means, unfortunately, that this outing will be restricted to 30 people. Early booking is therefore advised and a booking form is included with this Newsletter.

Cost will be £16 to include coach and the entry charge for a group visit to the museum with tea/coffee and cake.

Trip drop offs

With the goodwill of our coach drivers, we have been able in the past to agree multiple drop off points in the Sidmouth area at the end of our trips. The down side of this, though, is that it extends the day for those travelling all the way back to the Triangle and can lead to a problem with the driver's permitted hours. There have also been some safety concerns at some of the drop offs. For these reasons we will in future be dropping off only at those points where we pick up on the outward journeys. We thank you for your understanding and co-operation.

Holidays with the National Trust

Our neighbouring Honiton National Trust Association is organizing two short tours next year. Organiser Richard Coley would be pleased to hear from any Sidmouth Centre members who would like to join these trips. One trip will visit Kent from 1st – 6th July taking in Chartwell and Chatham Historic Dockyard amongst others. Pricing and final details for this will be available in January.

Further afield, a second trip will visit Dublin, Killarney and the Ring of Kerry from 3rd – 8th September. Cost for this, which includes a flight from Bristol, is £989 with a single supplement of £199.

If you would like further details please contact Richard by email at Richard.coley@mypostoffice.co.uk or on 01404 813163.

----- RECENT EVENTS -----

The Gifts of Two Benefactors



September saw us make the short trip into Somerset to visit two National Trust properties near Yeovil. Montacute House was built around 1600 as the country residence of Edmund Phelps, Speaker of the House of Commons and Master of the Rolls. An excellent outside tour gave us an idea of how the house would have been run in its Elizabethan heyday and of the impact it would have made on visitors arriving for the first time. The golden Ham stone frontage beset with many highly expensive windows would have left no doubt that the owner was a rich and powerful person.

Montacute remained in the ownership of the Phelps family until the early twentieth century and much remains unchanged from the original building. Its glory is the second floor long gallery, the longest surviving in England. There are stories of the Phelps children using the Gallery to exercise their ponies. This area is now used to display works on loan from the National Portrait Gallery, currently featuring Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James VI and I.

The house was sold in 1931 to philanthropist Ernest Cook from whom it passed to the National Trust, unfortunately without any furniture which had all been sold off. The Trust has since refurnished the house appropriately and it has been open to the public since 1932.

In contrast to the solidly Elizabethan Montacute, Lytes Cary Manor is an architectural hodge-podge. The oldest part of the property is the chapel, which dates from the fourteenth century. The Lyte family added a Great Hall and other parts of the house over the next few centuries before selling the house in 1755. Thereafter, the house fell into disrepair and was used as an agricultural store until being bought by Sir Walter Jenner in 1907. Sir Walter repaired and refurnished the house with period furniture before leaving it to the National Trust on his death in 1948.



Lytes Cary's original gardens have disappeared. The current gardens have been designed and laid out since the Trust took over and include several beautiful flower gardens as well as an orchard and some interesting topiary. Relaxing amongst the trees and flowers rounded off a beautiful day at these two contrasting houses.

A Glorious Day at Stourhead



In October we visited the magnificent house and gardens at Stourhead. It would have been impossible to have chosen a better autumn day for this trip with clear blue skies, warm sunshine and a full coach.

The beauty of these gardens is difficult to describe but the popularity of this property is obvious from the queues of cars entering and the volume of visitors throughout. Once away from the visitors' centre there was plenty to see around the extensive lake and gazing across the water was a truly tranquil and inspiring experience. Many of our members did the full walk and although the trees were not quite reaching their full autumn colours this in no way detracted from the

beauty of the scenery. Those who visited the house enjoyed the displays of art and furniture. There is so much to see at this remarkable property that it remains firmly on our list of properties to revisit in the future..

Mrs Greville's House Parties

We were delighted to welcome Mrs Ann Stoker, a volunteer at Polesden Lacey, near Dorking Surrey for our September talk. Ann has an extensive knowledge of the property and has also researched in depth the life of its most famous owner Mrs Margaret "Ronnie" Greville. Born Margaret Anderson, the daughter of an Edinburgh lodging house keeper, her father was in fact William McEwan, the brewing millionaire. This liaison with Margaret's mother was not officially acknowledged until Margaret was 21, nevertheless her father introduced her to refined society and she married Ronnie Greville, the son of an Irish Lord in 1891.

The Polesden Lacey estate dates back to the 14th century and the McEwan money enabled the Grevilles to buy it in 1906. Sadly Ronnie died in 1908 but Margaret, who was a friend of both Edward VII (who referred to her as a "born hostess") and Alice Keppel, his mistress, ensured that Polesden Lacey became the centre of society house parties.

The Duke and Duchess of York were frequent visitors, spending part of their honeymoon at the house and it had been Mrs Greville's intention to leave Polesden Lacey to them on her death. By the time she died in 1942 they were King (George VI) and Queen with little use for another country house so the property was bequeathed to the National Trust.

----- NEWS FROM THE LOCAL NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTIES -----

Donations

This is the time of year when the National Trust circulates a list of worthy projects that are looking for funding. Your Committee have chosen to support projects at Devon properties, which will allow Castle Drogo to undertake restoration work on three 1930s sofas and Finch Foundry to conserve and digitize their collection of photographs of the Finch family and the local village. We are also making donations to the East Devon Rangers to enable them to buy a chain saw and to replace a picnic bench at Salcombe Hill.

Thanks to all our members for your support this year which is what makes these donations possible.

A la Ronde

Linda Adams writes:-

We closed for the 2018 season on 28 October and we have put the house to bed. During our 3 months of closure the big winter clean starts. One of the jobs on the list this year is to work through all of the items in the Cabinet of Curiosities. Here is one of the amazing items we have found.



In 2019, further work will be continuing on the roof. We will be re-slating the top section, replacing the wood on the gantry, repointing, tiles and ridges around the dormer windows will be sorted and high level repair and redecoration will start. We will be focusing our fundraising efforts in 2019 for the work on the roof.

Our Gardening team will be busy over the winter, planting several 100 tulip bulbs, collecting the huge amounts of fallen leaves which we turn into wonderful leaf mulch, clearing the gardener's cottage area of brambles and self-sown ash saplings, mulching all the beds, winter pruning the apple trees on the estate and, before we open, laying woodchip around the perimeter path.

We will be having our 2019 Grand Opening on 2 February at 10.30am. The Town Crier and the Mayor will be joining us for this event.

Once again, a big thank you to the Sidmouth Centre for your continued support and we look forward to seeing you at A la Ronde in 2019.

Killerton

From 24th November, the house and gardens at Killerton will be decorated in line with the theme of Hans Andersen's The Snow Queen. As this is the story on which the animated film "Frozen" is (very loosely) based, you might even find the younger family members could be persuaded to accompany you on a visit this year! The display runs until 6th January, every day except 25th and 26th December. Entry is by timed ticket which can be booked online via the National Trust Killerton website. Normal admission prices apply.

Please note that the other properties on the Killerton estate - Budlake Old Post Office, Marker's and Clyston Mill - are closed now until the Spring.

East Devon Rangers

Lucy Buckingham explains the Rangers' autumn/winter work programme:

Scrub clearance work has now commenced at some of our sites (Lincombe, Dumpdon and Musbury) where Higher Level Stewardship schemes are held. This work will help protect the archaeology of our hill forts and allow other species to thrive and increase diversity in our sites. Positive wildflower indicator species such as betony, bird's-foot trefoil, common knapweed, eyebright, wild carrot and wild marjoram were recorded at Lincombe and Dunscombe this summer in areas once dominated by negative indicator species such as nettles, thistles, bramble, docks and bracken. We will continue to survey these sites along with our meadows in Exmouth next year.

Approximately 300m of stock fencing at Lower Halsdon Farm (Exmouth) has been replaced and we have just started laying another hedge as part of our long term hedge restoration programme which aims to benefit wildlife as well as enhancing the hedges' stock-proofing capabilities.

Traditional orchards are in decline. According to the People's Trust for Endangered Species, approximately 90% of the UK's orchards have been lost since the 1950s. In light of this, orchards have become a national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitat. Over the past four years, the Ranger team has been pruning fruit trees across our sites to remove damaged branches and increase light and air flow to the crown to help create a unique microclimate suitable for a variety of moss and lichen species as well as to improve fruit production. We will be holding two apple tree pruning workshops in February 2019 (Friday 1st and Friday 15th) to help maintain our orchards in Branscombe - if you would like to book a place on one of these events please contact 01752 346585.

Sidmouth National Trust Shop

The shop in Fore Street has been very kind to us this year, donating some very worthwhile prizes to our raffles. We would like to thank new manager Daniel McGrath and his team by encouraging you to visit the shop in the run up to Christmas. You know you can rely on the National Trust brand for quality cards and gifts, perhaps for that hard-to-buy-for relative.

The Wellington Monument

It's a couple of hundred yards beyond the county boundary into Somerset but few East Devon residents will not be aware of the Wellington Monument, which sits overlooking the M5 on your left as you hurtle back to Exeter. It was originally conceived as a plinth for a statue of the Duke of Wellington but after various changes of plan it ended up as the tallest (175 feet) three-sided obelisk in the world. Sadly, it is in a rather bad state of repair and the National Trust are launching an appeal to allow them to stabilize and restore it. Although there is a car park and some woodland walks, there are no facilities at the monument which can be used to raise cash so a special appeal is needed. Once completed, works will allow visitors to climb the inside of the tower to get marvellous views over Somerset and Devon. £2 million is required and, of course, every little helps. You can donate at <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/appeal/wellington-monument-appeal> or speak to one of our Committee members.



DATA PROTECTION – PLEASE READ

It's been the topic of the year for clubs and societies: the General Data Protection Regulation and how we can legally hold your details and stay in touch with you. By and large, there is little that you wouldn't expect us to be doing anyway but we are obliged to spell it out so here is the National Trust Sidmouth Centre's policy statement on data protection.

We hold contact details for you which may be kept in electronic or hard copy form or both. We will only use your data to administer the Centre and to keep you informed of our activities and events. We will not share your information with any other organisation.

The Membership Secretary maintains a database of members' details which may be shared with Committee members and our distribution helpers. If any of your details change, please let the Membership Secretary know.

There, that wasn't too bad was it? There is a more detailed version that can be found on our website or can be obtained from the Membership Secretary but, basically, that's it except for one other very important point:

Email Communication

Under the new regulation, we need you to opt in to receiving emails from us. We like to send you emails rather than hard copy because it is a much cheaper and quicker way of staying in touch. Many of you have already indicated that you are willing to receive emails but **we need you to do it again**. We need to be able to record and demonstrate that you have opted in so we are asking you all to tick a box on this year's Membership Renewal Form which agrees to us contacting you by email. Please do this if you possibly can.

Life Members

If you are a Life Member, you won't be filling in a Renewal Form so, if you are happy for us to send you emails, would you please contact (by email!) Membership Secretary Dave King with a short note to say you are content with that. His email is david@kingwoodpeckers.plus.com

TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

January is the time for non-life members to renew their membership for 2019. As agreed at the AGM, this year the membership fee is £7 each, which is still great value. Please don't forget your **stamped self-addressed envelope** in order to receive your membership card which will include a calendar of events for the year. A membership renewal form is included below.