

Lincoln Study Tour 09/06/16 – 13/06/16

Day 1

An early start from the Wyre Forest meant that the Group arrived in **Leicester** mid-morning to enjoy a full day exploring the story and site of the last resting place of **King Richard III (1452 – 1485)**, which also tied in with a previous visit to the Battle of Bosworth site, undertaken last year en route to our York Study Tour.

The Richard III Visitor Centre, housed in an old school, gave a thorough overview of the events leading up to the momentous discovery of the King's body under a car park, as well as historical background to the King and his times. This was done by various means: talking heads, projected footage, replica armour, information boards and time-lines, and also a reconstruction of the skull and TV footage of the actual dig and find.

The Discovery Zone showed some of the artefacts used in the dig and also a reconstruction of the King's skeleton with in-depth details of the wounds and marks that led to his death and identification. Not for the faint-hearted! There was also a reconstructed head, purporting to show how he may have looked in his lifetime.

The Visitor Centre displayed its information in an exceptionally accessible way, with lots of variety and modern technology and very helpful and enthusiastic Room Stewards. The highlight of the Visitor Centre was **the site of the actual resting place of Richard III**, hidden for over 500 years. The grave site is now superimposed with a hologram showing the position of how the bones were found, under the car park. This was agreed to be a moving memorial to a once-maligned monarch.

The gardens of the Visitor Centre were being planted out that day and an opportunity arose to talk to the Garden Designer. He explained how he had chosen historic and appropriate plants to create a 'feature garden'. Plants such as 'planta genista' (broom) in Royal Gold, white roses and a variety of sensory plants added a soft touch to an otherwise austere building.

From the Visitor Centre the Group moved to **Leicester Cathedral** for an informative guided Tour. The climax of the Tour was paying our respects at **the new tomb of King Richard III**, now re-interred near the High Altar of the Cathedral. No expense was spared to give this King a dignified, honourable and fitting last resting-place, with his tomb made of Kilkenny Stone and Swaledale Stone, and his crest made from lapis lazuli, chalcedony and red Chatsworth Stone. Everything had been very carefully thought out, including his pall-cloth which had symbolic embroidery over the whole surface.



Members of the History Group at King Richard III's Tomb.

The Group agreed that we were privileged to have been in Leicester and found the visit to be poignant, informative and memorable.

In the evening a Member of Lincoln U3A gave **an after-dinner Talk** to the Group on the history of Lincoln, its trade and famous inhabitants, and its geography. The talk was peppered with humour and anecdotes and was much appreciated as a suitable introduction to the Study Tour.

Day 2

The visit to **RAF Scampton Heritage Centre**, home of 617 Squadron, The Dam Busters, and of the Red Arrows Aeronautical Team, proved to be a most enjoyable, yet very moving experience for the Group.



The History Group at RAF Scampton with a 'Bouncing Bomb'.

There was a lot of interest in the exhibits displayed, which included a 'Bouncing Bomb' (see picture above), some WW2 aircraft, Wing Commander Guy Gibson's office and the Map Room, from which the **Dam Busters** were given final instructions before they flew over the Möhne and Eder Dams. There were photographs, documents, uniforms, maps and much more information to assimilate.

As the home of the **Red Arrows Aeronautical Team**, there were two Red Arrow planes on display as well as a full size mock-up, into which we were invited to climb, one by one. We were surprised how small the cockpit of a Red Arrows plane is and how squashed it felt. The instrument panel was very impressive. We were reminded that the following day the Red Arrows would be flying from RAF Scampton to London and down the Mall as part of the celebrations for the Queen's 90th Birthday.



The Guides were very informative and helpful and assisted us to get the most out of our visit, answering our questions with a wealth of knowledge. The Group felt that the visit was a unique opportunity to see a huge chunk of history in one location.

Lunch took place at the nearby **Scampton Inn**, which had a lot of WW2 and RAF Scampton memorabilia on the walls, including a signed sketch by Sir Barnes Wallace of the Bouncing Bomb.

A short walk from the Inn took us to **Scampton Church**, the site of many graves of young pilots who had flown from RAF Scampton and never returned. The moving, and sometimes heartbreaking, memorials emphasised the huge human cost of WW2. There was also a small plot commemorating eight young German pilots, which was very poignant too. The whole graveyard conferred a dignity and honour on the young men which was very emotional to experience.

Day 3

The day started with a **coach tour of Lincoln** and the **surrounding Lincolnshire countryside**. Our knowledgeable Guide, from Lincoln U3A, pointed out the most interesting features and facts as we toured the city and surrounding area. He acknowledged Lincoln to be the home of the Tank, and the start of the Fossdyke Canal, a Roman canal linking the River Witham to the River Trent, among other fascinating pieces of information. We also drove past RAF Waddington, where the International Bomber Command Memorial is. He explained the historical origins of the City and pointed out significant buildings and features

We were then given a **guided tour of the City on foot** before we were left to explore the Castle and Cathedral on our own.



The History Group outside Lincoln Cathedral.

Lincoln Castle is home to one of the four extant copies of the Magna Carta, and the Magna Carta Exhibition placed this historic document in its appropriate context. As well as viewing this 1215 parchment with the King's Seal still attached, we were also able to see the Forest Charter of 1217 (there are only two copies existing in the world) and the Charter to the City and Cathedral of Lincoln, sealed by King John in 1200. This Charter has never left the City since its sealing. All the documents were in very good condition and beautifully displayed and the Forest Charter and Lincoln Charter are unique. The Castle had an informative '**Wall Walk**', a complete circuit of the Castle above ground with magnificent views over the Cathedral and medieval City, and this provided a suitable background for part of the **Poppy Installation**, which had previously been at the Tower of London.



Lincoln Cathedral from the Castle Walls.



The Castle and the Cathedral.

Lincoln Cathedral is a vast and awesome space with a wonderful atmosphere. Some consider it to be the finest example of a Gothic Cathedral in Europe. Among the Cathedral's features are the 'Lincoln Imp' (a stone carving in the Angel Choir) and the Tomb of Katherine Swinford, third wife of John of Gaunt. Lincoln Cathedral also has links with King Edward I and his Queen, Eleanor, who died in Lincolnshire and whose body was taken from there to London, stage by stage, each resting-place commemorated by an Eleanor Cross. A recent, very moving installation is the wooden 'Stations of the Cross', with beautiful marquetry, and which visitors were invited to touch.

Day 4

Gainsborough Old Hall was the destination for this day's visit, and it was agreed that this historic, medieval building was a hidden gem. The Great Hall was built in 1460 on Saxon foundations and a medieval kitchen and West Range added in 1480. Many famous people were guests here, including royalty such as King Richard III, King Henry VIII and Katherine Howard, Henry VIII's fifth wife and there were also Dissenter, or Separatist, connections with some who would later become Pilgrim Fathers and sail on the Mayflower. John Wesley, the Founder of Methodism, also visited.



History Group outside Gainsborough Old Hall.

Our Guide was extremely entertaining, but also very knowledgeable. She gave us the origins of many phrases in common usage, such as 'the Chairman of the Board', 'sleep tight', the Pantry (from the French - le pain) and many more. She also provided many anecdotes which kept us listening keenly, whilst learning a lot. The contents of the Hall included many good portraits, beautiful panelling, exquisite

furniture and excellent information boards.

In the evening, after dinner,' there were Presentations to Margaret, the organiser of the Study Tour, and speeches, after which some members of the **Ukelele Group** entertained the Group with 'sing-along' songs, which rounded off the Study Tour in an appropriately upbeat manner.



Members of the Ukelele Group entertain after dinner.

Day 5

En-route to the Wyre Forest, the final visit of the Study Tour was to **Burghley House**, near Stamford. By contrast to the previous day's visit to a modest but historically important Hall, this splendid House delighted in boasting of its power, wealth, influence and possessions. Famous visitors included Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and there were magnificent paintings and furniture, and grounds designed by Capability Brown, whose well-known portrait hangs in the House. There are also close links to Worcestershire, for Henry Cecil, 1st Marquess of Exeter married his first wife, Emma Vernon, the Heiress of Hanbury Hall, near Droitwich. When she eloped with her curate, Henry disguised himself as a poor artist and bigamously married a 16 year-old farmer's daughter, Sarah Hoggins, from Great Bolas in Shropshire. Eventually, after his divorce from Emma, he 're-married' Sarah, who has gone down in history with the title of '**The Cottage Countess**'. A portrait by Thomas Lawrence of Henry, Sarah and one of their children hangs in Burghley House

.David, Lord Burghley, 6th Marquess of Exeter, featured as an Olympian in the film '**Chariots of Fire**'. Some of his artefacts are on display in the House.



Burghley House



Water Feature in the 'Gardens of Surprise'

A feature of the grounds are the '**Gardens of Surprise**' containing many water features, which delighted those who ventured out into the damp surroundings.

Altogether, the visit was deemed to be a great success and only gave us a 'taster' of an intriguing and historically important County.

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