

## Events and Outings (2019 to 2020)

Here is a record of iU3As various events and outings. It's not exhaustive and only captures some of the key ones.

### OUTINGS



#### April 2019 — Highclere Castle:

Twenty six of us enjoyed a day out at Highclere Castle, travelling from Paddington to Newbury by train and then by coach to the castle itself.



We all visited the

gardens and house and many of us also explored the Egyptian exhibition. The gardens are quite beautiful, with a variety of features including a wild flower meadow, Monks garden and secret garden. There is also a memorial to a plane crash in World War Two.



The fifth Lord Carnarvon was a sponsor of Howard Carter and there was an exhibition portraying the discoveries in Egypt that flowed from this, with a replica of Tutankhamun's tomb and the mummy itself the central features of this exhibition. Carnarvon died in Egypt shortly after the discovery of the tomb, lending further credence to the theory of a curse.

We also spent a considerable time in the magnificent house which is resplendent with paintings, furniture and other artefacts representative of the history of

its occupants. The castle is the third manifestation of a structure on this site. The first written records of the estate date back to 749 when an Anglo-Saxon King granted the estate to the Bishops of Winchester. Bishop William of Wykeham built a beautiful mediaeval palace and gardens on the park. Later on, the palace was rebuilt as Highclere Place House in 1679, when it was purchased by Sir Robert Sawyer, Attorney General to Charles II and James II and direct grandfather of the current Earl. In 1771 'Capability' Brown made plans for the alteration of the grounds, water and symmetrical Georgian house at Highclere for the 1st Earl of Carnarvon, the 8th Earl and Countess of Carnarvon.

Travel back to London was "uneventful" and the Outing a great day out.

**June 2019 (24th, Midsummer's Day) — Strawberry Hill House:** ["Horace Walpole's Gothic Castle"](#) — a venue like no other"



21 iU3A members enjoyed a visit to Horace Walpole's country retreat, visiting both the house and garden. The weather was kind to us with only the slightest sprinkling of rain to cool us off from time to time. This midsummer's day trip firmly establishes a precedent and we will now aim to have one of our outings on this day each year, to complement and contrast each year's Christmas outing.

We assembled at the café just before noon and met our first guide Sandra, who took us on a very

interesting tour of the gardens. Various outbuildings, including a small crypt, were seen and a limited amount of tree hugging went on. In Walpole's time the gardens were much more extensive, running down to the river. Sandra led a brief walk down to the Thames to see the small park and outbuildings, which remain from Walpole's time. An 18th century garden was an incredibly important statement of one's wealth and social standing, particularly in this stretch of the river known as the Arcadian Thames because of the large number of palaces and important houses fronting the river. Walpole, over his 50 years at Strawberry Hill House, developed his garden in the "structured informality" style of the English Landscape movement, with groves of trees and serpentine paths; this contrasted with contemporary rigidly formal gardens of France and Italy. Most of the original garden was sold and is now occupied by houses.



After the morning tour we reconvened at the café for lunch and then we met our afternoon guide Mark who was to give us a most incredibly informative tour of this most bizarre of houses, which has been extensively restored to its original décor. Developed from two modest cottages from 1747 onwards, Strawberry Hill House was built and decorated incorporating Gothic design details such as library bookcases based on a cathedral doorway and complex chimney pieces echoing medieval cathedral



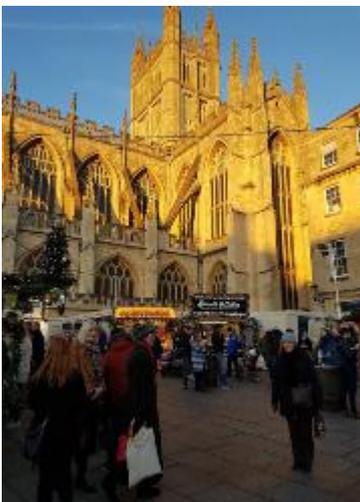
tombs. Wallpaper gives the illusion of carved walls and ceilings. Walpole bought medieval glass and placed sections in windows so that coloured light could illuminate the interiors. The largest room has gilded fan vaulting, and each room was a unique revelation. Horace Walpole was an avid collector of ceramics, paintings, enamels and miniatures, and one can only wonder about the thought processes which went into the creation of this "little Gothic castle" and its contents.

We learned that Walpole and his housekeeper arranged guided tours of the house with over 45,000 people visiting during Walpole's lifetime there. Walpole himself retreated to a cottage just across the road during the visits, lest he would have to socialise with the visitors. Coinciding with our visit the trustees had organized a summer flower show, with each of the extraordinary rooms full of summer blooms and their associated vapours. (Cressida Jupp and David McPhail)

**October 2019 — Margate:** This was another very successful iU3A Outing. See some of our members' comments about this visit [here](#). Full visit report [here](#).



**October 2019 — Bletchley National Computer Museum:** the trip itself was excellent and the guides and experts were very helpful and informative. One deficiency is that there is no cafe at TNMOC — just a shop selling pre-packed sandwiches and drinks but it has a pleasant outside seating area. We had a good look round before our scheduled guided trip and a very informative tour — though two of us bailed out before the end (it had overran by half an hour and we still hadn't quite finished). One memorable bit was a conversation with a retired ICL engineer about the 2966 they have. They really need more power to the site so they can run the 2966 more often!



**December 2019 — Bath Christmas Market:** on a sunny Monday morning in early December, nineteen members of iU3A set off from Paddington for a day out at the Bath Christmas market. It turned out that much was on offer in addition to opportunities for Christmas present buying, and food and mulled wine tasting at the 100+ pop up chalets in the centre of town. Some of the more hardy set off for a walking tour taking in the Holbourne museum (Raphael and



Matisse exhibitions currently), the Royal Crescent, a quick look at the outdoor ice rink, frequent reminders of Jane Austen and Persuasion, all of course in the setting of the stunning honey-coloured sandstone of the Georgian architecture. Others looked round the Abbey and then the Roman Baths for what turned out to be a highly recommended, fun guided tour. In the late afternoon as the Christmas lights were at their best we all met up for a delicious supper before a dash to the station for the journey home. (Lisa Crispin and David McPhail)