

# FORUM HOLIDAY 2016-06-10

## THE COTSWOLDS AND THE FOREST OF DEAN

Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> June – Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2016

Early on Sunday, 5 June, 2016, 46 members of Ryedale Forum 50+ set off on holiday. This was the eighth holiday which Terry Wray has organised for us so we were all looking forward to spending a few days with friends. It started really well as it was a lovely sunny and warm morning.



The first place of interest to stop at was Stratford-upon-Avon. Although some of us had visited Stratford previously there is always something of interest to be seen.

Part of the group took a boat trip along the Avon to see a different view of Shakespeare's town.



Others took a tour on an open-top bus. All of us enjoyed being there on a lovely summer Sunday.

Our hotel for the 5 days was the Hallmark Hotel just outside Gloucester .

Monday was a leisurely day. We took the coach into Gloucester and after a brief introduction to the city we made our own way around the interesting places there. These included the magnificent Cathedral



and the recently redeveloped Quays Area.



Again, it was a wonderfully hot day.



On Tuesday our Blue Badge Guide - Jane - met us at the hotel and she was with us for the whole day, giving us lots of information about, and insights into, the Cotswolds area of outstanding natural beauty.



We stopped in Broadway for coffee and then went on to Bourton on the Water for a lunchtime stop by the River Windrush. At teatime we were in Burford where many of us couldn't resist sampling the famous ice cream.

Wednesday again dawned warm and sunny and this was the day to explore the Forest of Dean and the lovely Wye Valley. Jane again told us stories and gave us background to the people and places in this area. We stopped in the exact middle of the Forest at The Speech House for coffee this morning.



The Speech House was built in 1676 by the King as a "court" where local people could have their say, regular Verderers meetings are still held here to discuss the management of the vert (the forest) and the venison (the deer).

The owner, who is one of the 'Verderers', gave us a very interesting talk about the house and the ancient traditions of the Court. We saw the oak trees close by which were planted by the Queen and Prince Philip in 1957 just 100 years after the one planted by Prince Albert in 1857.



Then it was down the Wye Valley and on to Tintern Abbey. The scenery in this area is just so beautiful it is not hard to realise why it became an area that tourists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century wanted to visit and so it continues to be.

By lunchtime the day had become very hot and although we do enjoy lovely summer weather it was unfortunate that the air conditioning on the coach was not working adequately.

Terry took a decision to change the route for the day to give us less time on the coach so we made an unscheduled visit to Lydney Spring Garden. As this garden only has very limited open days we were very lucky to be able to visit on the last of these for this year.

There was an impressive display of spring colour with flowering cherries, magnolias, rhododendrons and other scented spring flowering shrubs. But perhaps most appreciated on this very hot day were the fountains in the formal front gardens and as always – the tearoom!



Then, all too soon it was Thursday and time to set off for home. However, the best was yet to come. We drove for only about an hour to reach Hidcote Manor Garden.

This is one of the best-known and influential Arts and Crafts gardens in Britain with its linked "rooms" of hedges, rare trees, shrubs and herbaceous borders. Created by Lawrence Johnston, it is now owned by the National Trust.



Hidcote really is a delight to see and even those of us who had visited before still found it enchanting.



And so now it was off for home. The coach had fortunately been exchanged for one on which the air conditioning was working so we all felt much more comfortable.

The final chapter of our eventful holiday was a delicious meal at the Ash Tree Inn at Barkston Ash. Even though we arrived about an hour late the staff were very cheerful and served us all very professionally.



A great time was had by all. We can't thank Terry and Carol enough and, in this instance, we have to give extra praise to our driver Brian who, in addition to driving us each day, had had to make an extra journey as far as Nottingham to exchange the first coach for the second one.

Thank you Anna for the article and John and Mike for the photographs.

So many thanks all round from all 46 of us.