

## **Sandringham Estate – July 2022 (Away Day)**

Our July Shamblers' walk was to be our annual Away Day. The weather was set fine for the day, in fact too fine as it was predicted to be the hottest day of the year, and most probably the hottest day ever for Great Britain. Fortunately, with a following wind, the hottest day was moved to the Monday so we were saved. Even so, all windows were open on the minibus, very ably driven by Sally and Gordon, as we set off to the Sandringham Estate.



The journey was uneventful and, after parking the bus in the shade, we assembled with those who had gone in their own transport in the Courtyard. Although the walk was our main consideration, the chance to see around the house and gardens was available to those who had reserved tickets.



Sandringham is the Royal residence of Queen Elizabeth II and one of only two properties she actually owns. The house stands in a 20,000 acre Estate, part of the Norfolk coastal area of outstanding natural beauty. The house is a Grade 11 listed building.



In 1862 the house and 8,000 acres of land first came under royal ownership when Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales and future King Edward VII, bought it for £220,000. The house then passed down the Royal family line. In 1952, it passed on to our present Queen Elizabeth. She spends two months each winter on the estate. In 1977, to mark her Silver Jubilee, the Queen opened the house and grounds to the public for the first time.



The walk was to be short (just over 3 miles) due to the expected temperatures. The terrain would be easy going on well surfaced wide shady paths. We followed the yellow marked trail, being the longer of the two set out in the grounds. The path weaved between lofty conifers and ancient oaks, interspersed with open grassy areas, some with seating.

There was ample evidence of Prince Charles' influence as areas were set aside as wild flower meadow. Much consideration had been taken in the choice of plant species introduced.

Leaving the heat of the late morning sun, we struck off into the wild wood heading east. At one point, through a clearing in the trees and the help of a raised platform, it was possible to see the sea on the coast.



Hitting a tarmac road, we approached Victoria Cottages in West Newton and made a turn through an ornate gate way into open pasture. The sun by now had decided to ramp up the thermostat, and the road north rose gently past estate cottages known as Victory Cottages, shaded behind high Cyprus hedges.



Pausing in the shade of an old oak tree, York Cottage could be seen to the right. Known as the Bachelor Cottage and beloved of George V who remarked it resembled "three merry England pubs joined together", it is now the estate offices and holiday accommodation and flats for estate employees.

St Mary Magdalene Church was our final port of call. The refreshing cool of the inside was welcome beneath the perpendicular style ceiling. Built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century of carrstone construction, this Grade 11 listed building, with its profusion of stained glass windows, hosts the Queen and family for her Christmas day service.



Arriving back at the Courtyard, our picnic lunches were duly collected from the minibus and suitable seats were found. It was also a time to meet up with those who had chosen not to go on the walk. With a promise to be back at the bus by 4pm, it was then free time for the next two hours and the opportunity for a cooling ice cream.

Some had booked a visit to the House, whilst others were content to stroll the extensive gardens and lakes. On the far side of the House were the Stables, housing a small exhibition of the estate's early fire fighting vehicle and equipment.





The Butterfly Meadow is an installation of 2500 blue Butterflies, made in collaboration with the Norfolk Hospice Tapping House and a local blacksmith. Painted blue to resemble the Norfolk Silver studded blue, it resembles the same number of Poppies displayed at the Tower of London.

Everyone met back at the minibus at 4pm as planned and, with windows opened once again, we set off for home.