

Visit to The International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC)

A groups of about 20 members of the Local Heritage Group went to the IBCC for a conducted tour and then free time to look around the centre. We were shown round by Ken Moore who is an ex RAF flight crew member. He is very knowledgable and has a dry sense of humour.

Lincoln was selected for the location of the IBCC because 27 RAF Bomber Command stations (over a third of all Bomber Command stations) were based in the county during World War II. The large amount of airfields led to Lincolnshire being nicknamed the "Bomber County". The centre is just under two and half miles from RAF Waddington, which suffered the greatest losses of any Bomber Command station, and close to the former Avro aircraft production facility at Bracebridge Heath. The memorial is dominated by the Spire which was erected on 10 May 2015. The spire, reflects the connection to Lincoln Cathedral and is made out of Corten which is a weathering steel (also used on the Angel of the North). It is based on the dimensions of the wingspan of a Lancaster bomber, being 102 ft high and 16 ft at the base. Coincidentally the shorter length of the spire is the same as the wing span of a Wellington bomber. The Spire was officially unveiled in October 2015. It is surrounded by walls carrying the names of all 57,871 men and women who gave their lives whilst serving in or supporting Bomber Command. This is the only place in the world where all these losses are recognised.

In front of the Spire are The Peace Gardens. These include a Memorial Avenue as part of the Lincolnshire Peace Garden with a tree for each of the 27 Lincolnshire bomber stations. They are planted in positions relative to each other to show the location of the stations within the county. There is also an International Garden with planting beds representing the 5 continents and 62 nations involved with the Command. The Peace Gardens incorporate a Ribbon of Remembrance made of laser cut york stone which enables families, Associations and nations to mark those who served.

Also on the site is the Chadwick Centre. Named after Roy Chadwick, the designer of the Lancaster Bomber, It

includes an education suite, an interactive and immersive exhibition across three galleries, reference library, visitor facilities and a research room. The centre relates the experiences of service personnel in Bomber Command and the effects of bombing on civilian populations. It also covers both the war time and post-war reviews of the bombing campaigns undertaken during the Second World War.

After an enjoyable and thought provoking visit most of the group adjourned to the Butcher and Beast in Heighington for lunch.



Visit to Nidd Hall.



Our visit to Nidd Hall near Harrogate on 28th August began with an 8.00am departure from Branston Village Hall and after an interesting journey which involved a close encounter with a 10ft 6in bridge and our 11ft 3in high coach.

Arriving at the Hall, we were greeted by some very friendly staff members who explained the layout and took us in to coffee and biscuits. They presumably expected us all to arrive in pairs, as the biscuits were packed two by two, but no explanation was forthcoming, so the lucky front-runners ate both biscuits whilst others had to do without. However, any disappointment with biscuits was more that made up by the lavish spread which was provided for lunch.

After coffee, we made our way to the various activities that were on offer, which included archery (some of us managed to hit the target), a tour of the grounds (with commentary given by a very knowledgeable and entertaining Gardener), and opportunities to use the bowling green, swimming pool and spa as well as simply being able to enjoy relaxing in the very pleasant surroundings.



After lunch (did I mention how wonderful lunch was?!), there was another round of activities, this time including another archery session and Nordic walking which saw a full complement of 6 members practicing using two walking sticks each – or should that be discovering how to keep themselves fit with trekking poles? One group took the opportunity to try their hand at bowls, and eventually discovered which side the bias weight was on.

I decided to take some arty, low level photos of the bowls action, which involved stretching out on my front, and it wasn't until I felt too cold wet seeping through my shirt and trousers that I realised that the plastic "grass" was in fact a massive sponge. I had to take myself off to the quiet extremities of the grounds to dry off.



A third activities period followed, with a further tour of the grounds and some rifle shooting – and I'm sure some of the rifles were bent...

Then it was back into the coach and a low-bridge-free journey home. The interest this time was provided by the non-operational air-conditioning, which meant that we spent much of the journey with the roof vents open, which was quite a breezy experience. But we were all safely deposited back in Washingborough, Heighington and Branston after a very pleasant day. The weather had been kind to us, as had the staff of Nidd Hall. And we owe a big debt of gratitude to Marcus for organising such a wonderful day out, and to Chris who ensured that we were allocated the activities of our wishes.

Next year's August Social event is already being planned, with major items already booked. We shall nearer home so that it will be easier for all of to attend. Keep an ear to the ground to discover what we shall be doing – it will be very different!

James Hewson

The Visit that Never Was

In late September a group of members set off to visit the Manor at Woolsthorpe, the home of Sir Isaac Newton. It happened to be a very windy day with gales forecast and so the National Trust decided to close all of their properties in the region for safety reasons. In the case of Woolsthorpe it was probably to ensure that none of us had an apple fall on our heads resulting in us formulating an alternative Theory of Gravitation.



The Manor and the Apple Tree

When we arrived to find the property closed we had a brief discussion before going our separate ways to visit other places in the area that were still open.

Not only did they close the Manor but they also locked the car park with one of our cars inside. Luckily this was soon resolved and having gained release from the car park several of us decided to make use of the journey to visit the Easton Walled Gardens, just up the road. These were windswept but open, we had a good look round and enjoyed an excellent lunch



Late Colour at Easton Gardens

Others went in the opposite direction to the Engine Yard at Belvoir Castle.

This is an interesting £2.5 million development of mainly 19th century buildings which have been totally renovated and brought up to date. The complex was recently opened by Liz Hurley. The result is a retail village made up of a wide range of shops and a cafe and spa. Very interesting and well worth a visit.



The Engine Yard at Belvoir Castle

Although the weather spoilt our visit to Woolsthorpe we made the most of our day out and no doubt we will try again to visit the historic Manor.

**Remember for all the latest information
CHECK THE BRANSTON U3A WEBSITE**

www.branstonu3a.org.uk

**Branston & District U3A Christmas
Lunch**

11th December 2018

12noon for 12.30pm

**at Branston Hall Hotel Churchill
Suite**

**Cost : £28 per person for 3 courses
(£21 for 2 courses)**

Bookings to Chris Hodson

by the end of October

Natural History Group

For its early October outing, the Natural History Group visited Bradgate Park; the first time that we had been there as a group, and first ever for several of the 14 group members who went.

The park covers some 850 acres and, as part of Charnwood Forest area, lies just to the north-west of Leicester with easy access off the Leicester Western Bypass. It is maintained by Bradgate Park and Swithland Wood Trust. The park has many points of interest, including the "Old John" folly, a round tower with a buttress in the form of a handle, making it look like a beer jug; and the ruins of Bradgate House, thought to be the place where Lady Jane Grey was born. There are a number of oak trees in the park which were pollarded to mark the occasion of her execution by beheading.

However, the main focus of attention for the NH Group was the deer herd, in particular the Red Deer, as October is the rutting season and the deer roam freely about the park. Early enquiries elicited the fact that there was a herd not far off the main track, near the central tea room, so we headed off in that direction and were heartened to spot a stag very peacefully laying down surrounded by his large harem – and interestingly two other stags also resting close by. It was soon obvious that we were not going to witness any close combat between stags, which is what we were hoping for. Nonetheless, it was a wonderful experience to be able to get relatively close to such magnificent animals and a lot of photography ensued!

We were also delighted to see many of the fallow deer that roam the park, and again there were some splendid examples on view at very close quarters.

We did wonder whether we might be a little light on bird species, but in fact we recorded 36 species including a Stonechat family displaying at the top of a tree and a very confiding Green Woodpecker amongst others.

After a coffee stop at the tea rooms, we wandered back to the Newton Linford car park for lunch beside the River Lin (reputedly Leicestershire's shortest river!) and then drove off to the Hallgates car park at the far end of Bradgate Park for rather restricted views over Cropston Reservoir and a very productive (in terms of birds) hedgerow. Then a few of us wandered across the road into Swithland Wood to pick up a few more woodland birds.

It might have been our first visit to Bradgate, but judging by several comments being made, it will not be our last.

James Hewson



Coffee Stop at Bradgate Park



Croquet Group



Most of the members of the group were present for our celebration on 13th August of 10 years since our founding at Branston Hall Hotel. After play we enjoyed a Barbeque and quiz.

The group has a restricted entry due to the capacity of our lawns so unfortunately we are not able to take new members however things may change next season.

IBCC



Bradgate Park

