



The Bulletin Cam, Dursley & District

REASON FOR THIS ADDENDUM

Firstly, I would like to apologise to Perry McFarland, Carol Tipper and Carol Wilson for missing out on their Group Reports in the June/July editions of the Bulletin. I've investigated how it happened and I think I understand what went wrong (and thankfully it isn't all my fault) – after a year of accessing the dedicated gmail account for Bulletin matters (mag.u3a@gmail.com); about a month ago, Google decided to lock me out. Despite my best efforts and with the help of Sue Sacker, my predecessor as Bulletin Editor, I still cannot get in.

How to fix things? I've decided that the fairest and obvious thing to do is add this Addendum to the July Bulletin and worry about Google and its idiosyncrasies another day.

However, **please, do not** send anything to mag.u3a@gmail.com until further notice – use john.walton@outlook.com only.

Group Reports

Historical Places Group Visit to Croft Castle Herefordshire – Report by Perry McFarland



On 5th June 2026, after a pleasant journey through the sunny rural Gloucestershire and Herefordshire countryside, the Historical Places Group landed at Croft Castle, situated between the villages of Lucton and Yarpole.

A small battery-powered buggy is available near the car park to ferry those less mobile down to the castle. The toilets and tea rooms are located along signposted paths from the car park to the north of the castle. The tea rooms serve cold drinks/beverages and snacks, with seating both inside and outside. There is no gift shop at this site, however there is a second-hand bookshop near the stables where you can also purchase some books for 50p.

The walled garden is located behind the stables/bookshop and is planted with a variety of flowering perennials and shrubs that were out in abundance. The Nepeta, geraniums, roses, iris and poppies, to name but a few, added beautiful splashes of colour to the surroundings. Also incorporated within the walled garden is an orchard of historic apple trees containing 30 different varieties. At the time of our visit the volunteer gardeners were planting Cosmos and Rudbeckia to fill in the seasonal gaps. We noted tiny grapes forming on the Pheonix vines, these will go onto to make a crisp refreshing white table wine. The winemaking process is handled in collaboration with local vineyards such as the 3 Choirs vineyard. The yield is quite small and the wine isn't always available, but when it is it can be purchased from the Visitor Reception. Croft Castle is the only National Trust property to sell its own wine.

The ground floor and part of the second floor of Croft Castle are open to visitors. The ground floor consists of Oak Room, Blue Room, Saloon, Library with anti-room, Hall, Gothic Bay Room, East Staircase, Courtyard, Gallery, Dining Room and Gothic Staircase.

This castle is unique among the castles and fortified homes of Herefordshire for having survived and been lived in by members of a single family, the Crofts, since the Norman Conquest, apart from an interval of 177 years, from 1746 to 1923. After nearly 700 years of ownership the indebted family was forced to sell the estate to the ironmaster Richard Knight. The property was purchased by the Croft family trustees in 1923.

In 1746, Sir Arthur Croft surrendered the heavily mortgaged estate leading to a 177 year absence of the family, then in 1799, after passing through the Knight and Johnes families, the estate was purchased by Somerset Davies.

In 1923, Katherine Lady Croft successfully bought Croft Castle from the Davies heirs and held it until 1957, when the family gifted the castle to the National Trust whilst negotiating the right to retain private apartments.

The current estate consists of 1592 acres of parkland, woodland and farmland, with Fishpool Valley and Iron Age Hillfort. There are numerous walks laid out and well signposted, some leading to spectacular viewpoints which the visitors can enjoy.

The medieval church of St Michael and All Angels church, which was constructed around 1300, stands within the grounds of Croft Castle. The church is well worth a visit.

Historical Places Group Visit to the Worcester – Birmingham Canal – Report by Carol Tipper



The Historic Places Group enjoyed the sun whilst on a Brindley cruise boat on the Worcester–Birmingham canal. We were surprised to be told the water was only 4 feet deep. We left the Gas Works Basin and travelled to the first, now unused, lock which used to handle all the goods boats. This lock is 71-73 inches wide - 3 inches of clearance on most of the boats and used to be operated 24 hours per day originally by candle light. We then passed under the Black Sabbath bridge through the Black Sabbath tunnel. This canal took two years to build and was designed by James Brindley with children as young as five working there. Horses used

to pull the boats originally and their ropes damage can still be seen on the bridge stanchions. When Brindley died aged 54, Thomas Telford was employed to complete the canal which he designed to be deeper and wider. The railway follows the path of the canal and small canals were built off the main thoroughfare to put cargo on and off the trains, also goods were loaded directly from canal side factories. We passed a very smelly area by ladywood where all the boats emptied their latrines onto the fields nearby - half million pound houses are now being built on the land. It used to take the men two weeks to get to London but when the Second World War occurred the women had to do the jobs and could do it in a week. The round house was built in 1873 as stables for the horse and upstairs were the legal rooms, now it is a gin factory.



Memories of the Canal Visit

Garden Visits Group - Two Garden Visits for the Price of One Trip – Report by Carol Wilson

Well, I hope that those who came with us to Kilver Court Gardens and to East Lambrooke Manor Garden this month came home feeling as delighted with everything as I did. Such a treat!

Let me briefly outline the experiences. Kilver is not only a lovely garden, immaculately presented and full of dynamic surprises, from the viaduct towering elegantly over its landscaping to the many water features flowing and dancing through the flowers, shrubs and trees, but it is also a place to shop, eat and drink good coffee. Although the range of plants was limited, what they sold were in top condition and unusual. I would go again any time.

East Lambrooke was entirely different in every possible way. Privately owned, it had gone through many attempts to keep close to Margery Fish's original, groundbreaking creation of cottage garden style and spirit. We didn't need to be told what cottage gardening meant, once we had wandered through the winding paths and plant groups, we knew what we were seeing. Finally, we indulged in a second-of-the-day coffee and cake moment, bought plants from a wide, eye-catching range, and before we left some of us had been given a private walk around Margery's medieval/Tudor manor house.

A glorious day of memorable moments and tasty treats.

Footnote, if you're coming off the M5 North at the Thornbury exit any time now, look into the verge on your right and you'll have a treat – among the knee-high white daisies were the heads of many tall orchids, most likely a common spotted but just possibly a marsh orchid.

