

Add-Venture in Learning Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2020

Registered charity 2234953

www.add-ventureinlearning.org.uk

Welcome to our winter edition of the Newsletter. The committee would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy and peaceful new year. We look forward to seeing both old and new friends on this year's study breaks.

The committee endeavour to put on a variety of courses at different venues each year. Please do read the descriptions carefully to ensure that the course is suitable for you. Some will of course be far more active than others, and will require different levels of fitness.

The committee are always open to ideas for future courses. Apart from good ideas we need to find affordable accommodation with enough single rooms in an accessible place, and suitable for Guide Dogs. Please do not hesitate to contact our chairman or a member of the committee if you can help with the above.

FORTHCOMING COURSES for 2020

CLASSICAL MUSIC MEDLEY

Monday 30th March – Friday 3rd April – (4 nights)

PLEASE NOTE THAT AT PRESENT WE HAVE MORE VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE BOOKED THAN GUIDES, SO IF YOU ARE INTERSTED, PLEASE CONTACT ISOBELL TO GO ON THE WAITING LIST BY 10th FEBRUARY IF POSSIBLE.

GUIDES – We need your help please!

Tutor: Roderick Winfield

Organiser: Barbara Rickitt

PRICE- STUDENTS in single rooms £330 (double rooms where requested)

GUIDES in a shared room £270 (a supplement of £50 for a single room)

Cost includes accommodation in en-suite rooms with tea & coffee facilities, full breakfast, three course dinner and all talks etc.

We stay at the Royal Hotel set back from the seafront at Weston Super Mare, Somerset. There is a lift. It is a short taxi ride from the station and there is a free car park at the hotel.

This course will focus on composers who died before the age of 40. Our tutor will talk about the composers and we will listen to some of their music. Some of the composers are well known but some less so, and if time allows will include works by Mozart, Purcell, Schubert, Linley, Bellini, Chopin, Bizet, Boulanger, Mendelssohn and Hurlstone.

One evening we will be entertained by a local community choir 'Waves of Harmony' who will sing a variety of songs. We hope to have a visit to the local museum which is a 10-15 minute level walk away. There will be time to independently enjoy the long seafront, the pier and nearby park with its fragrant garden and a walled garden dedicated to the memory of Jill Dando. The course will end after breakfast on Friday.

Any enquires about this course contact Barbara on 01460 281226; email mrickitt@hotmail.com

NORWICH PAST AND PRESENT

Monday 15th June to Friday 19th June (4 nights)

Organised by Sandra Walster, assisted by Judy James

PRICE – STUDENTS -£350

GUIDES £250: mostly in single rooms.

ACCOMMODATION at Broad View Lodge on the University of East Anglia campus, near Norwich. All rooms are ensuite with tea making facilities. There is plenty of space for guide dogs.

FITNESS LEVEL – Please note a reasonable level of fitness is required to walk around the campus and Norwich and travel by public bus.

Breakfast and a 2 course evening meal are provided on the campus, and is a 10 minute walk from the accommodation. There will be places to buy your own lunch each day. We will catch the bus from the campus into Norwich city centre, which is a 30 minute ride away.

We will have different speakers to talk about Norwich and The Broads. There will be a guided walk round the city centre. We will visit the Castle Museum including a handling session and a tour of the famous Cathedral and a medieval Merchants house. There will be a trip out to Gressenhall Rural Life Museum, with its working farm and rare Suffolk Punch horses. Back on campus we are planning a tailored visit to the Sainsbury Arts Centre.

Travel arrangements - Parking is provided at Broadview Lodge. Norwich station is 4 miles away and a taxi costs between £6 and £10. Bus 25 runs from the station to the campus stopping near the Lodge, and you can contact Sandra or Judy if you need assistance. If you are travelling via London the Mega Bus can be good value, booked on the internet, and goes directly to UEA.

PLEASE NOTE – The bus fare into Norwich is not included so please bring your bus pass if you have one.

Any queries or further information, please contact Sandra on 01953 607016 or Judy 01202 880114, email: judy174@btinternet.com

HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN YORK

Monday 17th August to Friday 21st August

Organised by Eleanor Tew and Mary Goodlad

PRICE – To be advised as not all the arrangements are confirmed as yet

ACCOMMODATION – York University in single en-suite rooms, a short bus ride from the centre of York. Breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal are included

FITNESS LEVEL – Please note that this course will involve active sightseeing to walk around York and travel by bus from the accommodation

The history of York goes back at least to the Romans and a lot is still being done to uncover it. There are plans for a big Roman Dig in the centre of York and a Roman Museum to rival the Jorvik Viking Centre which we will visit. We hope to visit an actual dig but this has not yet been confirmed. In any case we will visit “dig” a centre designed primarily to introduce children to archaeology, which is very accessible and great fun. We will visit the Minster and perhaps other historic buildings and probably have talks on ceramics and conservation. There are lots of things for people to do in York in their spare time, depending on their interests and energy.

Any enquires about this course to Mary Goodlad 01142 429023, email: sistergoodlad@yahoo.com

AUTUMN BIRD MIGRANTS AT GIBRALTAR POINT

Monday 5th - Thursday 8th October (note: 3 nights)

Organised by Karen Colebourn

PRICE AND EXACT DETAILS ARE STILL IN THE PLANNING STAGE

Accommodation will be in a nearby hotel on the edge of Skegness, with evening meal.

There is a railway station at Skegness.

FITNESS LEVEL – This course will involve a reasonable degree of fitness to walk on uneven ground and stand around birding.

Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve is a dynamic stretch of unspoilt coastline running southwards from the edge of Skegness in Lincolnshire, to the mouth of the Wash. It is known for its scale of diversity of wildlife. In autumn we will hear various migrants and flocks of waders appearing at high tide.

We will be going out early each morning and taking a late breakfast at the reserve café, and having a packed lunch. We will be discovering other areas of wildlife interest in the afternoons.

Note: This course will have restricted numbers. Some of you will remember a similar course at Slimbridge a few years ago.

BOOKING ON COURSES

To book on any of these courses please contact Isobell Phillips, Course Co-ordinator on 07731 867931 or email phillipsisobell@yahoo.ie

A £50 non refundable deposit is required at the time of booking and full payment is due at least 6 weeks prior to the course. When booking please give full details of your name, address, phone and email and next of kin or emergency contact. You can download an application form from the website.

New guides please contact Isobell with a reference first.

Cheques made payable to Add-venture In Learning should be sent to

Isobell Phillips
2 Holly Drive
Pen-y-ffordd
CHESTER CH4 0NE

BACS payments to Lloyds 30-00-01, a/c 02904643

Please let Isobell know if you are paying by BACS and always mention what the payment is for.

For bookings please try Isobell first, but if not available for a while then contact Mary Goodlad on 0114 2492023, email: sistergoodlad@yahoo.co.uk

REPORTS FROM 2019 COURSES

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS COUNTRY PARK

19-23rd August 2019, by *Barbara Rickitt*

This course, arranged by Karen Colebourn was held at Ampleforth Abbey College on the southern fringes of the North Yorkshire Moors in August. There is still an order of Benedictine Monks in residence who have regular services in the Abbey Church every day. The residential Catholic college that has grown up around the Abbey is an amazing place with different houses and teaching blocks set in splendid grounds with modern sports facilities. As well as our group there were many others staying during the school summer holidays, a group of children on a cricket course, a yoga retreat and a choir practising for their concert later in the week.

Some guides drove to the college but the majority of our group arrived into York station where we met up to get our coach to Ampleforth about 40 minutes away.

We resided in St John's House where we had a common room and kitchen on the ground floor. Karen had kindly set out our own bar and generously donated the proceeds to Add-Venture funds. Our comfortable bedrooms were on two floors above. As the college is on the side of a hill there were then about 55 steps up to the dining room, so in all we had a lot of steps to contend with. The food was delicious and packed lunches were provided.

On the first evening Karen led a walk around the grounds but some people chose to join the Monks in the Abbey for Compline, which was very peaceful. But our sleep was shattered that night by the fire alarm going off. We all made our way downstairs and the security guard was called. It turned out to be a fault and so we all went to bed.

On day two after a brief introduction, we went by coach to a spot on the Moors above the pretty village of Hutton le Hole. Karen explained the vegetation growing there and we passed around samples of the plants. Something appeared to be in Karen's eye which quickly became very inflamed. However, she led a walk across rough terrain down into the village, but some preferred to stick to the road. We ate our picnics in different places and visited tea shops. As luck would have it, guide Jean who lives nearby but couldn't attend the course, came to join us for a while. As Karen's eye was now in a bad way, Jean whisked her off to her own doctor who thought she had been stung on the eyeball and set her up with various antihistamines. Meanwhile we all visited the Ryedale Folk Museum. This was an extensive site of reconstructed old buildings from the area and greatly enjoyed.

Our evening speaker talked about the Land of Iron Project which brought in aspects of Geology and History.

The next day we were off on the coach to the Egton Agricultural Show. However, Karen was still in pain and had to keep her eyes closed, so after setting her up with breakfast and a picnic lunch she stayed behind. We were met at the gates as arranged and taken to a marquee for coffee, then led to watch the cart horses being fitted with new shoes, then on to the dog show. By chance we met a local man who was happy to talk about his collection of old tractors and lorries which was surprisingly interesting. After that we split into our couples and made our way around the various

exhibits. In the evening we were going to have a talk by Karen about the various stuffed birds that she had borrowed from the National Park, together with listening to bird song. However as Karen was still unwell we examined the birds and socialised, and many of us were happy to have an early night after a tiring day.

The next day Karen had recovered somewhat, and we welcomed Brian Sweeney who was a lecturer at an Agricultural College. He kindly gave us a talk about Estate Management. This was fascinating and engendered many questions of political and environmental interest. In the end we had to drag everyone outside to get the coach up to the high moors where we tramped around in the cold and wet to look at the vegetation and have further discussions with Brian. From there he went home and we continued to Rievaulx Abbey. Here we warmed ourselves with hot drinks in the café before doing our own audio guide. The weather had improved and it was a peaceful setting. Although no roofs remain there were enough of the walls and foundations to get a sense of what a splendid place it would have been.

The proposed quiz on the last evening was abandoned as most people chose to attend the choral concert in the Abbey.

On Friday it was back home by car or to York station in the coach. Chaos ensued at the station as an earlier train had broken down for 2 hours blocking the lines and making everything late. The assistance people were rushed off their feet but were very good. In the meantime incoming trains were bringing people to the York races and we enjoyed some interesting sights of ladies in their posh frocks, very high heels and hats. Eventually everyone got a train to their destination having had a very enjoyable time away. So a big 'thank you' to Karen for a splendid course.

CHURCH STRETTON

18th – 21st October 2019, by Fran and Peter Hodges

We gathered on Friday evening at the Long Mynd House Hotel, 26 VIPs and guides. Our leader, Bruce, introduced himself, saying that we would have his undivided attention the whole weekend. He announced that on Saturday we would visit Wroxeter to view the one-time Roman city, and then onto Wenlock Priory. On Sunday we would visit Powis and Stokesay castles. We would be provided with packed lunches and travel by coach each day – so no public transport!

The hotel is situated on the side of the Long Mynd among trees with views over the town of Church Stretton. Weather for the weekend was, thankfully, kind if a little chilly. But we were well prepared as we made our way, VIPs, dogs and guides, up the drive to meet the coach on Saturday morning.

On the way Bruce used the excellent coach microphone to tell us about Wroxeter. He is a very experienced archaeologist who also now leads historical tours. Wroxeter is close to the River Severn near Shrewsbury. The day was well planned. Viroconium was the Latin name of the site and it was the fourth largest Roman city in Britain. It started as a military fort and then developed into a city of some 15,000 people. However, after the Roman withdrawal from Britain it fell into decline and was eventually abandoned. Excavation has revealed a lot and Bruce led us around describing how large the city once was. Take Roman baths, for instance: while we think of bathing as a healthy virtue, in Roman times the slaves were sent in first to warm the water meaning that the masters and mistresses might have had it warm but only after the slaves had washed off the dirt and grime of household duties. This caused some amusement among the party! Finally, we were treated to a hands-on experience of 2000 year-old Roman pottery found at the site.

After a packed lunch at Wroxeter, the coach took us to the priory at Much Wenlock. Here, Bruce explained how it originated in Anglo Saxon times, later became a Norman priory and was dissolved by Henry VIII, but much remains standing today. The setting, at the edge of town among tall pines, yew hedges and topiary, is dramatic yet peaceful. After a busy and enjoyable day, dinner back at the hotel was very welcome.

The hotel looked after us very well. The staff were efficient and diligent to our needs. And they did enjoy the opportunity to stroke the three off-duty guide dogs resting under our tables!

Powis Castle is a National Trust property and demanded an early start for the drive into Wales. Bruce had arranged a special tour and this would be the first time the castle had organised for a group visit of VIPs with dogs and guides. On arrival at 10am – an hour before public opening – we were greeted at the castle entrance by staff and volunteers. The house manager explained that we would be divided into groups of two VIPs (plus guides and dogs) with each group allocated a tour guide. It all went extremely well. Everyone was both capable and helpful in dealing with our special requirements, including being invited to touch objects not permitted to the general public. A nice touch, indeed! But soon it was time for us to set off for Stokesay castle.

Stokesay is a very different castle. It is near Shrewsbury and was built in the 13th century by a wealthy Ludlow wool merchant. It is described as a 'fortified manor house' but in fact was more a prestigious home. It has changed very little over the centuries and so today is a fascinating piece of history.

We thought the weekend was a resounding success. Many thanks to Barbara for that, and also to Bruce our excellent leader for planning and leading with professionalism and good humour.

This report is by Peter, my husband, and is the guide's viewpoint of the weekend. We share a great interest in social history and it made for a super memorable AddVenture for both of us.

A BATHHOUSE, A PRIORY AND TWO CASTLES

The Church Stretton Weekend, by Jim and Maggie Beed

On the coach to our first place of interest our leader, Bruce, talked to us about the way it was some two thousand years ago when the local tribes on the Welsh border encountered the invading Roman army. It seems that there was some antagonism and a bit of actual fighting before the invaders got on top of the situation and started to settle in. Some three hundred years later, when they left again, the natives had decided to continue with the imported lifestyle, at least for a while. We were told that Wroxeter started as a Roman fort, but when the need for that ended it became a city, the fourth largest in Britain at that time, with ten thousand inhabitants. So we arrived at what can still be seen at the site already knowing a little of the story. What was once a very large bath house has been partially excavated, and Bruce was able to explain something of how the citizens then lived. Slaves stoked a furnace which provided under-floor heating and hot water for the bathers. There was a strict pecking order for when the baths were used, slaves first and others later when the water got hotter.

Then we crossed the lane, which had once been Watling Street, to visit a recently built replica of a Roman house. Built on the site of what was once the Forum, the bases of the original Roman pillars

were in a ditch about five feet below the present ground level in front of the house, showing how deep the remains have become buried over the centuries.

In the education centre genuine artefacts were handed around so that those without sight could hold and feel them. It was explained that many items had travelled long distances, showing the extensive trade routes existed even at that time.

In the afternoon we moved on a few centuries and visited Wenlock Priory. It was founded about 680 A.D. by King Merewalh of Mercia. The Prioress, Milburga, was later made a saint when some miracles were attributed to her. The priory ruins showed that the building originally was very large; the nave of the church was about three hundred and fifty feet long. Bruce again gave us a very good insight into how both the nuns and monks there lived their lives.

The town of Much Wenlock has another claim to fame in that it was where the concept of the modern Olympic Games started and there is a town trail concerning that.

It would seem that before the coal mines opened the main industry in Wales was building castles. The country is peppered with them. On the second day of the weekend we visited two contrasting ones.

The building of Powis Castle started about 1280. In 1587 it was bought by the Herbert family and they have kept a connection to it ever since. It is regarded as having the finest collection of paintings, furniture and murals in Wales. Napoleon said that the Wurzburg Residence in Germany was the most opulent building in Europe, but then, he never went to Wales!

For the visit we divided up into groups of four or six, each with a guide. Crossing the courtyard, with peacocks wandering around, we entered at the very imposing front door. Calling it that is something of an understatement. After that it was one magnificent thing after another. To make it even better, those without sight were permitted to touch and feel much of the furniture and artefacts that visitors are not normally allowed to. The magnificent paintings dating back as far as Elizabethan times, and the beautifully kept gardens were pointed out and explained by our excellent guides.

In 1784 the son of Clive (of India) married Lady Henrietta Herbert, took the Herbert family name and also the castle. So it is that one large room is filled with the items brought back from India, including some very nasty looking weapons and a litter that a lady would have been carried around in when she ventured abroad. Two cannons, captured from Tipu Sultan, are placed on either side of the castle entrance, possibly to deter cold call salesmen.

In contrast are the dormitories and classrooms set up for a girl's school that was evacuated to the castle in 1940. This was in the nether regions of the building, away from all the magnificence.

For all the grandeur the thing that impressed me most was the electrics. Electricity was installed in the castle early in the 20th. Century, when it was still rare in ordinary houses. Having once been involved in putting in cables for a telephone system into an historic house it amazed me that they were able to do the wiring without spoiling panelled walls, ornate ceilings and painted murals.

In the afternoon it was on to Stokesay Castle, a very different building. Built by a wealthy wool merchant, Laurence de Ludlow, in the 13th century, it was really a fortified manor house designed to guard against possible intruders. A wood-framed gatehouse leads onto an open space with a dry moat and on into a large, but now unfurnished hall with a stone floor, a roof held up by huge balks of timber, unglazed windows, it was the height of desirable residences then. Cooking and heating were by an open fire in the middle of the floor. Not that good as a defended house, it rapidly surrendered when besieged by Parliamentary troops in 1645.

Close to the gate house is Stokesay church. We went in and were surprised to find box pews! Each row was in a wooden compartment, with a door to get in. Once in the worshipers could see the vicar in the two-tier pulpit, but the rest of the congregation could not see them. Even more unusual were what at first looked like confessionals. In fact, they were family pews. Completely enclosed, the occupants could not be seen at all by the rest of the congregation.

Footnotes. It was our first time on this type of weekend, and we were very impressed. We met many pleasant and interesting people, and four very friendly guide dogs.

Longmynd Holiday Fellowship House provided very good food and accommodation.

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## **NEWSLETTER FORMATS**

Newsletters are usually available in the following formats, Standard Print, Large Print, email, Braille or audio on memory stick..

You are receiving this newsletter because you have elected to be on the mailing list of Add-venture In Learning. If you no longer wish to be on this list, or prefer the newsletter in a different format, please let our secretary Doreen know.

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