

## DAY 1 GETTING THERE

With suitcases lined up, a band of eager travellers boarded the coach, only 53 weeks later than originally planned! Graham, our driver, duly loaded them on board and off we set down the A46 towards Hampshire.



Our first stop was Oxford where we took a leisurely break for lunch before heading to our hotel at Langstone Quays on Hayling Island, for our four night stay.

Prue Chadderton.

## DAY 2 THE NEW FOREST

After a wet arrival on Hayling Island the previous afternoon, it was a joy to see our day in the New Forest begin with glorious sunshine!



Leaving the hectic motorway behind us, we entered the peace and calm of the New Forest. Graham chose a route known to him where he felt confident we would see some of the ponies – and they didn't let him down!! Then onwards to Beaulieu, the ancestral home of the Montagu family since 1538. The estate covers a vast area of parkland which has been developed over the years. It now provides many attractions for an enjoyable day out, to suit all ages. However, our time and choices were limited and therefore members of the u3a party could be found wandering in amazement around the world-famous collection of 280 vehicles in the National Motor Museum, learning more about the Montagu family in the Palace House or strolling through the historic walled gardens after refreshments at the Brabazon Coffee Shop. I believe that at least one member took to the Monorail for a bird's eye view of the park!!

We then boarded our coach for the short ride to Buckler's Hard, a unique 18<sup>th</sup> century riverside village, where warships for Nelson's navy were built. A highlight of the visit was a tranquil 30 minute cruise along the Beaulieu River, accompanied by a commentary revealing its fascinating history and describing the abundant wildlife. Just perfect on a hot afternoon! Once back on land again we were free to roam and explore the village, with its 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages, Maritime Museum, chapel and, of course, the Tea Rooms.

A most interesting and enlightening day.

Jenny Porter

### DAY 3 THE ISLE OF WIGHT

It was an early start to catch the ferry to the Isle of Wight, on a pleasant sunny morning. The crossing, from Portsmouth to Fishbourne was on the ferry St Clair.



On the way to Osborne House, we made a brief stop at St Mildred's Church, Whippingham. It was built for the Royal Family's use and contains tombstones of the Romanovs and Mountbattens. At Osborne House we met a guide who directed us to highlights to look out for. A group photo was taken which appeared later that day on Facebook. Only the ground floor was open, but there were extensive grounds to explore, including a walk down to the beach, which was used by the Royal Family and the Queen's bathing hut now sits just by the sea.

David Howard

### Day 4 MARY ROSE - PORTSMOUTH



On Day 4 we went straight into Portsmouth to the Mary Rose Exhibition.

The Mary Rose was built in 1510 and sank in 1545. She was engaging in the Battle of the Solent with the French fleet and, due to a freak wind whilst turning she leaned, taking in water through her open gun ports. At least, that is one theory, there is no documented evidence.

The Mary Rose was raised in 1982 and after considerable efforts to preserve what remained, she is now housed in an environmentally controlled building in a purpose built centre in the Portsmouth dockyard.

There are guided tours available but we chose to go around freestyle. There are large numbers of posters, interactive screens and videos describing various times in her history as well as glass fronted cabinets containing artifacts with comprehensive details on their likely use and often about their recovery and preservation. The number of artifacts to be seen is quite incredible. Many of the larger items are in galleries opposite the ship and showing at the same level as the deck where they would



have been used, for example a number of cannon are on the same level as the actual gun deck they were on.

So there are three viewing platforms, each one level with one of the decks, and the top one being in the environment with the ship herself. It is very difficult to describe and you can get some idea from the picture. At intervals there were scenes projected onto the ship's frame in the appropriate position, depicting what was happening during the battle. For example, we could see a gun crew loading and firing a cannon, as well as archers on the top deck firing across and down into the enemy ships. The

whole thing suddenly came to life.

It is a really fantastic museum well worth a visit. There are more photos in the Holiday page gallery on our web site. The details about the Mary Rose and her history are on their web site on <https://maryrose.org/>

Some of the group visited other areas and exhibits and many explored Portsmouth during a free afternoon in the town.

Sid Miller

## DAY 5

Well Friday arrived, as had our last day in Hampshire. There had been some unusual aspects to the holiday (carried forward from 2019) due to Covid, i.e. wearing masks all the time unless eating or drinking in our dining room, remembering to put them on again when moving around the hotel, or other venues. Rooms were serviced once during the stay, but all things were made bearable by the genuinely helpful and friendly staff who were also dealing with an unusual situation. During our stay they all worked very hard to become organised and efficient.

We had breakfast and then took our suitcases to the bus (no portorage available). We left the Langstone Hotel and the view of the boats and river promptly at 9.15 to make our way to St Albans for our lunch stop. Good time was made for the pleasant drive to St Albans and we arrived earlier



than expected. Bruce and I had been there before and had visited the Cathedral etc, so we spent our time viewing the street food market stalls, although we didn't try anything on offer as the centre was hot and busy. We eventually found a nice café that was cool inside where we had cappuccino and almond twists (very moreish).

Eventually, we all regrouped and Graham our driver was waiting at the appointed stop early and although fresh air was needed after wearing masks in the city centre, the air conditioning on the coach was most welcome. We left St Albans at 1.45 and made our way to South Mimms to connect to the A1. Unfortunately, it was the usual mayhem of Frantic Friday traffic, but most ably negotiated by our driver, who had to get across two, sometimes three, lanes of traffic which seemed to completely ignore the traffic lights with many drivers blocking the roundabouts. Once past the congestion, a good pace was made to Gonerby Service Area where a short break was made before continuing to the other drop off points. In the meantime, Sid gave thanks to Prue for organising the holiday and to Graham the driver.

On a personal note and I think thoughts held by several others, although it was a busy schedule, we all had a lovely time and enjoyed catching up with old friends. The hotel was very good, we had lovely meals and best of all Prue announced that she is prepared to organise next year's trip to Kent (Hurrah!).

Ruth Berridge